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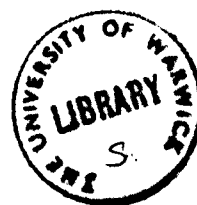
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“Sociability and the public sphere in the Fallas of Valencia”

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SUMMARY

This thesis is an empirical study of the sociability and the public sphere in the Festival of the Fallas of Valencia (Mediterranean Spain). It argues (a) that festive traditions are not necessarily opposed to modernity but may be successfully interwoven with present-day experience, (b) that festive traditions have a 'festive sociability' which is 'reflexive' and (c) that this reflexivity generates a distinctive public sphere.

Extensive interviews, participant observation and involvement in the work of several Fallas show that they are community associations which permanently deploy festive sociability in preparing an annual Festivity which reaches its climax between the 15th and 19th of March. These communities are widespread throughout the Valencian Region and beyond. There are 750 associations which, in the City of Valencia alone, have more than 100,000 members. Their main objective is to construct the gigantic satirical and artistic monuments which are burned on the night of the 19th of March in celebration of St. Joseph's Day.

A network of close families and groups of friends are the main agents of the festive tradition of the Fallas; and the core mechanisms for transmitting it across space and time are play, humour, comensalism and 'festive work'. The tradition is flexible enough to link its permanent festive sociability with modern institutions such as schools or the City Council and rich enough to include modern economics, administration and voluntary associationalism in its community based action.

This festive sociability makes selective use of forms of modern, critical reflexivity which feed into its corresponding public sphere, thereby preserving and modernising a form of European popular culture heavily influenced by Carnival. Fallas' sociable debates, their reflexive relation with the mass media, their satirical and critical parades with fancy dress and their satirical, artistic and ephemeral monuments are the centre of this public sphere. It incorporates modern experiences into a tradition which structures its social criticism in terms of myths and the symbols of the grotesque body.

ABBREVIATIONS

- DC: Demarcation Committee (*Junta de Demarcación*),
- FCC: Fallas Central Committee (*Junta Central Fallera*, JCF). Central co-ordinating agency
- FM: Festival Queen (*Fallera Major*)
- FMI: Children's Festival Queen (*Fallera Major Infantil*)
- GC: General Committee or Committee of a Falla (*Junta Directiva*)
- JCF: Fallas Central Committee, FCC (*Junta Central Fallera*). Central co-ordinating agency
- JD: General Committee or Committee of a Falla (*Junta Directiva*)
- JL: Local Committee: (*Junta Local*)
- JS: Sector Committee
- LC: Local Committee (*Junta Local*)
- SC: Sector Committee (*Junta de Sector*)
- PP: Partido Popular
- UV: Unió Valenciana

GLOSSARY

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Arreplegà | Money raising parade |
| Blusón | Working, festive costume in daily use during the Festival |
| Bocadillo | Sandwich |
| Bunyol | Sweet pastry in the shape of a ring doughnut which is eaten during the Festival days; symbol of the Festival; name of the Fallas Central Committee's prizes |
| Burlon | 'Leg pullers' or teasers |
| Cachondeo | Teasing and making fun |
| Carcassa | Large fireworks |
| Casal | Festive locale and meeting place. The Casal is also called 'Falla' |
| Chorrada | Crazy and silly thing |
| Comidilla | News and rumours |
| Comissió (de Falla) | The Falla as association |
| Coto | Reserved hunting area |
| Cordà | Spectacle with free fireworks in the streets |
| Córrer la traca | Playing to escape from fireworks |
| Cremà | The burning of the Falla's monuments |
| Cuadro | Colourful group composition made during the ceremony of the Presentation |
| Despertà | Parade to wake up the neighbourhood |
| Diablada | Crazy but planned satirical activity |
| Entrepà | Slice of cooked meat |
| Falla | Festive community, satirical monument and locale (Casal) |
| Fallas | Plural of Falla and name of the Festival |
| Faller/a | Name of Falla members |
| Fallera Major (FM) | Festival Queen |
| Fallera Major Infantil (FMI) | Children's Festival Queen |
| Festejos | Celebrations and parties |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Figurar | To 'pose' or show off |
| Follón | Crazy disorder characteristic of some meetings and activities |
| Germanor | The Fallas' sense of brotherhood |
| Guason | 'Kidder' or teaser |
| Juerga | A revel or 'good time' |
| Junta Central Fallera | Central co-ordinating agency: Fallas' Central Committee (FCC) |
| Junta Directiva | Falla's Committee (or General Committee) |
| Junta Local | Local co-ordinating agency: Local Committee (LC) |
| Junta de Sector | Sector (neighbourhood's demarcation) co-ordinating agency: SC or DC |
| Llibret | Falla's annual booklet |
| Lucirse | Festival Queen's and Fallera's festive coquetry, characteristic of parades |
| Masclet | Characteristic type of fireworks and a main symbol of the Festival |
| Mascletà | Midday fireworks display |
| Monument | large, satirical and artistic structure of ephemeral figures which are made of wood, cardboard and glass-fibre and are burnt the 19th of March |
| Ninot/s | Puppet/s: the monuments' ephemeral grotesque figures |
| Ofrena | Ritual of offering flowers to the Virgin |
| Pandilla de amigos | Group of friends, peer group |
| Paella | Dish, meal and symbol |
| Pique | Joke competition, repartee |
| Play-back | Singing a song (karaoke) and/or miming a popular music groups |
| Presentación | Presentation of the new Festival Queen |
| Socarron | A powerful joker |
| Sopar de sobaquet | Friday night dinner in the Casal |
| Tertulia | Gentle and playful discussion |

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A 'special category', prize winning Falla 'momument'

A children's Falla



Offering of Flowers to the Virgin (viewed from the back)



Offering of Flowers to the Virgin (viewed from the front)



Ninots



Ninots



Fallers in *blusons* outside their Casal



Image of the Virgin and memorabilia inside a Casal



The Fallera Major and the President of the Falla

Plaça Doctor Valls, Godella



Presentation of the new Fallera Major



A street parade of Fallers in gala costume



A fancy dress parade of Fallers



La cremà: burning the monument at the end of the Festival

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the result of intellectual curiosity, sociological imagination and personal experience. As a native and life-long resident of the Spanish city of Valencia I have long been curious about the origins and history of its annual festivities which culminate during Lent in massive fireworks displays, popular religiosity, exotic street parades and the burning of huge 'monuments'. As a sociologist with special interest in culture I also wanted to exercise my sociological imagination on these festivities, popularly called 'Fallas'. In particular, the nature of the festive sociability which pervaded the Fallas puzzled me. They were clearly part of the 'public sphere' in Valencia, but the prevailing theoretical ideas about the public sphere did not help me to make sense of the Fallas' unusual combination of popular piety, satirical criticism of modernity, neighbourhood associationalism and earthy humour. This is why I decided to conduct qualitative sociological research into the Fallas in the early 1990s and to do so mainly by means of participants observation. As a full-fledged activist in one particular Falla in suburban Valencia, and as an occasional visitor to many others, I spent several years helping to prepare and run all the activities which lead up to the climactic festivities.

Very few social scientists have studied the Fallas methodically. There are some accounts of the festivity's historical development (Ariño 1992; Hernández 1996) and of its 'folk-like' symbols and rituals (Fuster 1992; Soler 1990a, 1990b; Blasco 1990; Sanmartín 1990). But my study is virtually unique for three reasons. Firstly, it

is based on empirical fieldwork over a long period of time. Secondly, it places its findings in the context of theoretical ideas about tradition, modernity and the nature of the public sphere. Thirdly, it elaborates on George Simmel's concept of 'sociability' with the aim of capturing the sociological distinctiveness of what I shall call 'festive sociability'.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter One is about the general characteristics of the Fallas. It includes a brief outline of the origins and history of the Festivity, an account of the associational importance of its festive sociability, a comparison between Fallas and other festivities, and a description of the key rituals. Chapter Two deals with the methodology of the study. It explains the reasons for choosing a 'qualitative' and 'participant' orientation for the research. It also includes a description of the festive settings and actors that were selected, a discussion of the techniques used, and an account of how I gained access to the field. Chapter Three locates the research problem that this study addresses within ongoing theoretical debates about tradition, modernity, reflexivity and the public sphere. The first part presents a basic outline for a theory of festive traditions. Its key concepts are sociability, festive sociability, reflexivity and the public sphere. The second part criticises Giddens's and Habermas's understanding of the transmission of tradition. I argue that they have a restrictive view of reflexivity and the public sphere. The concept of festive sociability provides a better understanding of the distinctive form of reflexivity and public sphere to be found in those age-old festive traditions such as the Fallas which are interwoven with present-day experience. Chapter Four opens the discussion of the empirical findings of my fieldwork. It provides an analysis of the core mechanisms of transmission of the Fallas, focusing on festive sociability. The

agents of the 'territorial sociability' of the Fallas are mostly families and groups of friends, but the Fallas have vertical and horizontal forms of transmission which operate within and across generations. The central activities of the permanent festive sociability of the Fallas are identified as play, humour, comensalism and festive work. Fallers are able to enrich the tradition through constantly adding modern experiences to the activities of festive sociability. Chapter Five analyses the basic principles of festive sociability, its democracy, universalism and criteria of equality. The tension between forces of unity and diversity in the festive community and the participants' perception of internal and external boundaries and differences are connected to these fundamental 'sociable' principles and criteria. The role of shared knowledge in reflexivity is also discussed in this context. Chapter Six examines the construction and organisation of the Festivity. The results of the tension between unity and diversity are shown to depend on the Fallas' form of organisation, key figures and co-ordinating agencies. Memory and the rhythm of festive sociability are pre-conditions of the Fallas' organisation as well as being reflected in the transformations of family life, space and time and the festive group's local headquarters (the Casal). Fallas are community associations which keep their festive tradition alive with the aid of modern rationality, economics and administration. This contemporary knowledge is subordinated to festive sociability, however, and is interpreted by the participants within the framework of tradition. Chapter Seven is an analysis of the Fallas' social identity, symbols and transcendence. The participants' main symbols are rooted primarily in the activities of festive sociability, but the Festivity also includes other 'civic' and 'religious' symbols which are considered of secondary importance. The Fallas up-date the non-ascetic motifs of European popular culture. Their fundamental

symbols are transitory and perishable but they serve as a way to gain transcendence through the practice of the ephemeral and the artistic. Chapter Eight extends the previous discussion of symbols by locating them in the Fallas' distinctive public sphere. The most visible symbol of the Festivity is the critical and satirical 'monument' which is ritually burned down on the final day, but other aspects of the Fallas' public sphere also promote social and cultural criticism: 'festive' language, ambiguous relations with television and other mass media of communication or the satirical parades of popular criticism. I conclude that the Fallas not only have a distinctive form of festive sociability which is virtually unique but that they also practise a distinctive kind of critical reflexivity in their own public sphere.

1. The festival Of The Fallas of Valencia.

Every year the City of Valencia, situated in the central area of the Mediterranean coast of Spain, celebrates a very special sort of Festival: *La Festa de Les Falles de Valencia*. (See the Glossary for English translations of Catalan and Spanish terms.) People refer to it as *Las Fallas* (in Spanish) or in the Valencian dialect simply as *Les Falles*¹ or, also, as *Les Falles de San Josep*. This last appellation highlights the fact that the event is associated with the Festivity of St. Joseph on the 19th of March. The night of St. Joseph is usually called 'The Night of Fire', *La Nit del Foc*, because at midnight the artistic and satirical constructions of wood and paper, that are Las Fallas, are burnt. It is the moment when the masses of participants, visitors and tourists who have been filling the streets of Valencia during the previous days in enormous crowds of up to 1,000,000 people, completely take over the streets and collect in the main squares to experience the burning of these constructions. The concurrent fires of this

magic night, spread through the streets and squares of the city, are the central act of an Ignic Festival, accompanied by fireworks that mark the climax of the whole Festivity.

The Falla is both the object and the subject of the celebration. The Falla, as an object, is the most visible part of the Festivity in each neighbourhood of the city; it consists of an elaborate construction of wood, cardboard and glass fibre between 10 and 30 metres high. Fallas are ephemeral monuments that are complex critical and satirical sculptures comprising many free-standing figures of mythical and fictional characters and celebrities drawn from various situations and scenes of life. They constitute a sort of 'tableau vivant' or static theatre, depicting popular or topical themes.

The behind-the-scenes part of each Falla consists of an association of supporters and active participants called the *Commissió Fallera*, or also '*Falla*'. In this usage '*Falla*' is also the subject of the Festivity. The Falla associations are an important social phenomenon in Valencia, a city of about 900,000 inhabitants. Fallas are festivals sustained by a movement that is geographically widespread. They are a network of long-standing voluntary associations that have more than 200,000 members in the Valencian region. The basic organisational unit is the Commission of Falla, that normally comprises 200-300 members. These voluntary associations are highly organised and are distinctive for their combination of economic and administrative rationality that generates intense festive sociability in a solidly rooted tradition. There is an association of the artists who design and build the monuments as well as a central committee that co-ordinates the general activities of the Festivity.

Each association is rooted in a neighbourhood of Valencia or even in a smaller area. It has its centre of activity in a community building (like a community centre)

known as a Casal. The Casal may also be called 'Falla' because it is the locus of the life of its association. The whole urban area of the City (and now many other villages and cities of the Region) is completely divided into these locales of the Fallas. The Casal is the physical base for the range of social activities that are at the heart of the sociability of the Falla. The activities are enormously varied, including organising committee meetings, annual general meetings, meals, dancing, youth disco parties, and other events for children, cards and other games, watching TV, theatre, money raising activities (with lottery tickets and raffles), 'play-back' (in which people dress up as popular singers and mime to their recordings), karaoke, other musical activities and many other different kinds of gatherings organised by the Fallers in the Casal or in the nearby streets.

The Festival unfolds during the month of March, but the climax is between the 14th and 19th of the month. This period is organised as a programme of events and celebrations, which feature brass bands, fireworks, religious processions like the Offering of flowers to the Virgin, *L'Ofrena*, satirical parades and a great variety of ludic (playful) outside events that culminate with the *plantà*, the setting up of the Falla monument and its *cremà* or burning down during the Night of Fire. This night brings to an end a year of activity dedicated to designing and constructing (or commissioning an artist for the design and construction of) the sculptural, satirical monuments that are called Fallas. The end of this enormous effort that requires such a huge amount of energy and money is paradoxically the destruction of this very same monument. In the end, all the work and activity of the Fallers is aimed at burning down the object that represents them, the monument that they would just have finished four or five days before somewhere near their Casal.

The Festival also shows that tradition and modernity are not necessarily two irreconcilable opposites. Fallas are traditional but they bring the old myths in the rituals of fire up-to-date. They are also syncretic in so far as they bring in elements from contemporary experience and produce a peculiar *pastiche* of the old and the new. At the same time the Festival is a modern event that breathes new life into the collective memory of the community each year through the exercise of its particular, highly organised, voluntary associationism and festive sociability, incorporating art, humour and critical satire as tools to renew the tradition. From this perspective, the Fallas are not just a modern creation but they represent the persistence of ritual and myth in dialogue with present-day culture. Tradition is thereby enriched and made more complex. It not only 'survives' the attempts to replace it but it also persists. The old, sacrificial fires of the rural Ignic Festivals are continued in the modern festival of *Las Fallas*.

2. Origins and history of the Fallas

Fallas, as a tradition, have evolved in ways which depart from the rural Fire Festivals of Europe. Frazer (1963) collected an impressive amount of data about them, and worked out an influential interpretation. The figure of the puppet, which is normally burnt, is supposedly linked to the Ephemeral King, who is associated with the old divinities of vegetation and periodically sacrificed as a scapegoat, thereby helping to purify the community and renew nature (Frazer 1963: vol.vi). A large number of festivities, including Carnival², destroy these figures. Hubert and Mauss (1968: 283 ff.) devote the final part of his well known study on sacrifice to this King-God. According to them, this sacrifice is mythological and displays a peculiar affinity

between the nature of the victim and the god, which permits the god to double as a victim thanks to the ambiguity and plasticity of myth. This mutually transformative double guarantees the cyclical resurrection of the god in harmony with social and natural rhythms.

This general interpretation of the ancient ritual has given rise to a variety of representations. Bakhtin (1987: 178 ff.), like Frazer, understands the puppet as successor to the Ephemeral King of Carnival, and as the focal point of popular festivals. The puppet is destroyed when its presidency over festivities is finished. It is satirised, assaulted, broken into pieces and drowned or burnt. This puppet represents Winter or the old year but it also represents the Ephemeral King's capacity to reproduce and so the fertility of the year. Sometimes the puppet is taken on a parody procession which constitutes the origin of Carnival parades. The paradigmatic destruction of the puppet takes place in the public square as a festival of fire, bringing death and renewal. The community is renewed and grows with it, thereby symbolising resurrection.

Fallas contain a representation of that sacrifice in the context of a popular festival. The puppet was called *parot* in Valencian dialect. With the passing of time, the *parot* was transformed into a range of different satirical figures called *ninots* (puppets). Subsequently they were organised in scenes that criticised daily life and events in the community. The old guilds, particularly those associated with woodworking crafts, seem to have taken a key role in this process of transformation. This is one of the reasons why Saint Joseph, Patron of the Guild of Carpenters, is still connected to the Festival. The most notable change has taken place in relationship with the double, victim-god. Now, the importance attached to the victim, the puppet,

has been enhanced and enriched as much as that configuration of the sacred. New rituals have also been recently incorporated into the previous framework, but the essential change may still be easily seen. The ephemeral satirical monument occupies the place of the victim, and the ambiguity of myth is now interwoven with art, satiric criticisms and fantasy as a medium for depicting scenes and people from everyday, modern life. The sacred has also come to accommodate various figures such as St. Joseph and, very recently, Our Lady of the Unprotected People.

It is now more difficult to disentangle the victim-god double, but a part of it remains 'public'. The persistence of myths still makes it possible for satirical criticism to make the connection between art with the purifying power of fire. As an element of the public sphere of the Festival, the monument is still capable of linking the 'public thing' with myths, satire, art, play, fantasy, emotions, the body, nature and its rhythms.

It is not possible here to give an historical explanation of the ways in which the local version of this rich, satirical culture became linked with popular fire festivals. However, for my purposes it is enough to mention three concurrent factors, which help to explain local cultural background for the development of the Fallas. First, the richness of the Valencian Baroque at the level of ephemeral sculpture and architecture (Pedraza, 1981). Second, the relevance, and continuing persistence, of the Corpus Christi festive procession. The Carnavalesque part of this procession included large artistic mobile altars, constructed by the guilds, for street representations³. Third, there is a continuity with previous satirical and burlesque novels, debates and poetry⁴.

The modern socio-historical development of the Fallas has been studied by Antonio Ariño (1992) and Gil M. Hernández (1994, 1996). Ariño (1992: 16) situates the development of the Fallas in the context of the process of modernization. Fallas surpassed Corpus Christi which had long been the Valencian celebration “par excellence” as a product of the social changes associated with the urban transition: demographic growth, the transition from stratas to classes, etc. However, it is not only the bourgeoisie which influence the Festival but also the local ecclesiastical strata is shown to be affected by this celebration which occurs in the middle of Lent. Ariño offers us a telling example in this respect. He quotes Friar Traglia, who, with the pseudonym of “the lover of truth”, was denouncing the gluttony, lasciviousness and curious contents, which occurred during Fallas as not in line with devotion to Saint Joseph (1992: 58). In this sense Ariño associates Saint Joseph with the preponderant influence of the Jesuits and the Carmelites.

The Falla monuments progressively replaced the *parot* during the 18th century, becoming considerably more sophisticated at the beginning of the 19th century when foreign observers were often stunned by the nature of the Festivity.

According to Ariño (1992: 87-91), at the end of the 19th century the homogenizing culture of reason produces a new reform in the celebration. Towards the year 1895 general agreement about the meaning of Fallas emerges. This reform is based on three considerations: the importance of Fallas at the level of Valencian identity, the prizes and the benefits which the City obtains from the celebration of Fallas. He also indicates that we cannot postulate a homogeneous social class basis for the Fallas because they exist on streets of greatly differing socioeconomic levels. A process leading to a greater degree of formalisation and organisation of the

Commissions culminates with the creation of the first centralising agency during the Second Republic.

For Gil M.Hernández (1996)⁵ Franco's Regime had to support the Fallas because of the widespread popular support, which they had acquired during the first third of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the Regime tried to revive an alternative: the July Fair, but it falters because its popular support was already in a state of crisis at the beginning of the nineteenth century, well before Franco. This accounts for that the fact that despite Franco's attempts to revitalise the Fair by allotting most of the budget to it at the expense of Fallas (until 1967) the Fair floundered whereas Fallas did not. Fallas were popular in themselves yet the Regime gave them an added importance as it clearly understood that it was a celebration which could be exploited for both political and economic ends. As a result, Fallas are declared of 'National Tourist Interest' in 1946 and later in 1967 of 'International Tourist Interest'. All of this is revealing about the Regime's recognition of Fallas as the Valencian celebration par excellence.

The impact of the "development" planned by the Regime paved the way for a new extension of Fallas. This is a political impact linked to other parallel processes. For example, the City undergoes a boom as well, after the forties, growing demographically and especially in the fifties, sixties and seventies (1996: 345). This urban growth implies that there is a Falla in every neighbourhood. It is precisely on the outskirts of the City that Fallas experience their greatest growth and expansion to the point where, at the end of the Franco Regime, the majority of Fallas are in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the City. According to Hernández, until the middle of the fifties the majority of Fallers were Valencians, especially from the City itself

but from the sixties onwards the number of non-Valencians grew in response to extensive immigration. Fallas invade the rest of the festive calendar and make a place for themselves in the calendars of other regions, often usurping other local Festivities and setting up new “*Juntas Falleras*” (Local Fallas Committees)

Nowadays, Fallas are ‘colonising’ new territories, festivities and celebrations. The process starts in the 19th century. Important Valencian cities such as Gandia and Xàtiva have had Fallas since 1864 and 1865. Alicante copied the Fallas to make ‘*Les Fogueres d’Alacant*’, ‘The Bonfires of Alicante’, during the 20th century. The expansion continued and has been impressive in recent years. Fallas are now dispersed throughout the whole Valencian Region. There are more than 750 of them, including several abroad (Paris and Buenos Aires). Fallas infiltrate other festivities such as the July Fair, the *Mare de Deu dels Desemparats* (Our Lady of the Unprotected People) or local religious festivities. The Virgin’s procession, for instance, is now undertaken by Fallers. In local religious festivities such as *San Roque* in Benicalap, the Fallas of the neighbourhood have the honour of carrying the Saint’s mobile altar. At the same time, Fallas import other festivities into their calendar. Some of them are traditional and Christian, Christmas or Easter for instance, but others are different, such as Halloween. The number of new ‘imports’, as Hernández (1966: 277) has shown, has been considerable in recent years. Fallas are therefore becoming ‘globalised’ as a festive tradition⁶.

Gil M. Hernández (1996: 142) suggests a five-stage periodisation of the transformation of the celebration during the Franco years. The first is the reconstruction phase (1939-1944). The ruling powers know full well that everything has to start from scratch, so money is given directly to the celebration and especially

to the individual Fallas until they can operate on their own. In the middle of the forties the original funding is suspended. The second period is the consolidation phase (1945-1952) in which the norms for the celebration and for the Commissions and the ideological model are consolidated. The third phase is one of stabilisation (1953-1959) which coincides with the end of autocracy, stabilisation and economic liberalisation, entering into a free market, in short a European-style framework although always keeping within the confines of the dictatorship. Another phase of the development and expansion of Fallas occurs from 1960 to 1971 and is followed by the definitive consolidation in 1972 to 1975.

Control and uniformity were a clear objective. Censorship was especially strong in the fifties, when it affected about 90 per cent of all the Fallas which were set up. Hierarchisation was promoted by means of regulations. The first regulations were put in place in 1944, and this was followed by others in 1952, 1955, 1958, 1964, 1974, 1980 and 1989 to 1990. The Fallas Central Committee was created in 1939 in order to control the celebration, substituting the Republican 'Asociación General Fallera Valenciana'. In 1944 the organisation of the celebration was taken over by the City Council and from that year until today the Counsellor of Fairs and Celebrations became *ex officio* president of the Fallas Central Committee.

Fallas become an arena for party politics during the Democratic Transition, as I shall explain in Chapter 6, but continued to expand. During this period, as Manuel Castells has shown (1977, 1983) Spanish 'civil society' is renewed with the great explosion of neighbourhood civic associations. In this period Spain regains the levels of associationism of the Second Republic⁷. Castells could not predict, however, that he was studying a short-lived 'sociological mirage'. When the Transition finished,

Castells's associations had shrunk considerably as if they had been part of a mirage; and a period known as 'the disenchantment' followed the attainment of 'formal democracy'. However, Fallas (and other Valencian festive associations), as Rafael Ll. Ninyoles has shown⁸, continued their sustained increase after the Transition till 1993.

Festive associationism is solid in Valencia. Josepa Cucó (1990: 252 ff.) gives four reasons for this. First, committees include 25% of total members. Second, 50% of members regularly help and participate; only 20% are do not participate frequently. Third, members spend a lot of their free time in the associations: 83 % go to the association several times per month. Fourth, there is a huge invisible network of non-registered 'participants' who are linked to formal members. Rafael Ll. Ninyoles (1996: 48 ff.) estimates that the rate of associationism in Valencia, at 23%, is a bit higher than in the Spanish State (22%). This means that Valencia has the third highest rate of voluntary associationism in Spain. Fallas constitute 19% of this population, or more than 4% of the population in the greater Valencian metropolitan area⁹. Real membership is however difficult to determine for Fallas because, as we are going to see in this study, they have a wide network of people who participate without formally joining¹⁰.

3. Fallas and other festivities

Mediterranean popular religion is linked with festivities. Boissevain (1992: 137 ff.) has described the peculiar blend of saints, music and fireworks in Malta. The Fallas belong in this general frame of reference. Examples of this character are the Falla's street comensalism or the emphasis on parades in which skilful body movements in costumes and fancy dress are accompanied by music, flowers or fireworks. This is all

in the context of a distinctive Mediterranean sense of street life, festive sociability and sense of transcendence. This gives to Valencian popular religion a special flavour which Spanish newcomers, particularly if they are from non-Mediterranean regions, easily identify as typical. For example, a newcomer from Jaen, where the religious processions are 'serious', said:

'The first year I arrived in Valencia there was a procession of Saint Antony. I went to my balcony and saw the Saint running through the streets, with fireworks and so on, with the musical band behind, and all running. Well, I said, is this a procession?. In my homeland the processions are serious. Here they run the Saint, make him dance, they move him, even throw him or do whatever they want. Nobody in my homeland would believe this could be possible'

Fallas have other particularities. Fallas are in the middle of Lent, and have a carnivalesque background which separates them from the local religious festivities. As I shall show in Chapter 7, members do not think that Fallas are as 'religious' as the local festivities of 'saints' and 'virgins'. They see a stronger connection between Fallas and other Festivals of fire in Spain and in the world. The main difference for them is the higher artistic level of the Falla. An artist explained this by comparing the beginning of the Fallas with a less sophisticated festival of fire in Southern Spain:

'In Santa Fe, in Granada, there is a big figure that is burnt. It is very close: there is a monument similar to the Falla, and it is also criticism, but there it is not done with full body figures. It is done with drawings. The people who have this ability make comics and criticise things. Afterwards they burn it /.../ There are also coincidences in Chile. I remember one of their criticisms about

the local police that was very strong, with big muscles, who was portrayed like Superman. They don't have the artistic level of the Falla. They put a big stick of wood with something for the head like a straw man with a hat, and burn it /.../ It is the *parot* . The evolution of the Falla is something similar. The *parot*, the figure, started to have an artistic level because of the groups of friends. One of them said: "My friend, the painter, will paint the face of the milkman", and so on.'

Another distinctive characteristic of the Fallas is their focus on criticism, which is connected with cleansing by fire. As a senior member said: "The Falla has its origins in criticism. Many years ago, it was to burn all the old things, such as burning feelings of revenge or envy. Then you burnt all that, burning envy, so that later things will turn out well as if you had cleansed them by setting fire to them under the symbol of the Falla". As we shall see in this study, Fallas are part of the broad heritage of European popular culture, heavily influenced by Carnival (Bakhtin 1987). A sense of liberation accompanies the possibility to say and do crazy things which can be shared by anyone who wants to behave in this popular way.

Another characteristic of this popular culture is its 'universality', which differentiates it from local religious festivities. Fallas are not only a matter of play, humour, comensalism and the universality of laughter and fire, but they are also predominantly a matter of festive work. As we shall see in this study, festive sociability is a permanent feature of the Fallas and requires a lot of work and commitment to the shared festive project. Festive sociability in the Fallas also has a great sensitivity to equality and universality. Consequently, Fallas easily

accommodate newcomers, while the other festivities are fundamentally composed of locals only.

A further characteristic of Fallas is that they are interwoven with modern institutions. Valencian schools currently organise Fallas which, as I shall show in the section on children, are a source of experience and an opportunity to recruit members. But groups of friends currently make spontaneous bonfires, even if they are not formally registered members. These groups of friends may be part of modern institutions. The degree of sociability in many organisations, such as in hospitals, can be enhanced with the making of Fallas by the staff, who then use some of the hospital waste to make the pyre. According to a nurse, she and her companions (in the most important hospital of Valencia) had the opportunity to “criticise some doctors without causing much trouble, in a comic way”. Fallas’ motifs figure in the decor of shops and transport facilities such as the Airport of Valencia.

4. The three main rituals

Fallas have moved towards the adoption of features from many other festive traditions. Therefore, they are now wider than Carnival, although they include it as an element of their festivities. As a result, the number and quality of the celebrations and social events have increased and become more diverse during the last fifty years. There are, however, fundamental rituals which structure the Fallas. They are performed in the wider context of the rich, permanent and distinctive festive sociability of the Fallas. They are the Presentation, the Offering of Flowers to the Virgin (*Ofrena*) and, of course, the burning of the monuments (*crema*)¹¹.

(a) The Presentation is the first main event of the festive period. It normally takes place between the last days of January and the beginning of March. Its structure is extraordinarily ritualised (and generalised) but varies from Falla to Falla. Essentially it is a public ceremony of ritual substitution, transmission, and renewal of the key symbolic representative figure, the Fallera Major (Festival Queen). The Presentation is also a 'presentation' of the newly formed Commission which had previously chosen the new FM in the ceremony of the Election (usually in the Autumn). The Presentation, as I shall show in Chapter 6, is very important for the organisation's rhythm of festive sociability. It is also felt as a great challenge for the Commission at several levels. It 'measures', for example, the financial state of the Falla and the degree of commitment to work for the shared project.

The Presentation is normally located in a cinema or theatre in the neighbourhood that has been rented or 'borrowed' by the Commission. The audience consists of the members themselves, their families and friends, and a great number of neighbours and members of the public. The ceremony is very long (five hours in the Falla Dr. Valls of Godella), but enthusiasm is maintained because each family is going to see at least one of its members on the stage, and neighbours will recognise their own friends singing, dancing or performing an art.

The Presentation is in two parts. The first part has the structure of a ritual and is formal and serious. The second part is a festive spectacle organised by the commission that includes entertainments that the Commission has been preparing for a long time. 'Play-back' (karaoke), dancing and music, are usually on the programme.

Senior members of the Committee take the Flag of Valencia and the banner of the Falla up on stage at the same time as the band plays a distinctive piece of the

Fallas' musical repertoire to open the first part of the ritual. The old Fallera Major and the President are welcomed with intense applause. Then, the presenter, with the help of two members, starts to call the participants up on the stage. They are organised into couples of different sex with women carrying a bunch of flowers, and the couple receive an award from the old FM. Every couple disappears immediately from public view and goes to sit at the back of the stage on stairs leading up to a throne prepared for the Fallera Major. Women sit in the centre with their bunches of flowers and men stand up on the sides. The group wears the traditional Valencian gala costumes.

The presenter then summons the new Fallera Major. After she has been received with rapturous applause the old FM descends from the throne; the President (but in some Fallas the old FM) takes her sash and puts it over the new FM; she immediately occupies the throne for the first time, sitting at the top of the '*cuadro*' picture formed by the full Commission. This crucial moment constitutes the centre of the ritual of replacing the FM and transmitting her attributes. But her presentation would not be complete without the intervention of a poet who praises her qualities to the audience. The success of his speech will be measured by the emotional effects created on the audience. It praises her more and more highly until she becomes the exalted, idealised Queen. The first part of the ceremony ends with the singing of the Valencian Hymn.

The second part compensates for the formality of the ritual with a series of entertainments which draw loud applause and enthusiastic audience participation. The aim of both parts of the Presentation is an empowerment of the Commission and a feeling of personal and collective self-confidence to cope with the future events of the festive programme.

(b) The Offering of Flowers to the Virgin was created by the Fallas Central Committee, the Council centralising entity, in 1944. The event was a total success, rapidly becoming established in a few years. During the sixties and seventies the Offering took the form of an spectacular mass offering held in the open Square of the *Verge* (Virgin), where Her Basilica is also located. To give an idea of the scale of the mass ritual, in 1997 an estimated 90,000 people participated, but they do not include the many other Fallers who performed the Offering in other localities of the Region. By contrast, a plan to develop an Offering of Flowers to Saint Joseph failed when the same Francoist authorities proposed it in the fifties. The new Offering of Flowers to the Virgin is clear proof of a religious ‘repositioning’ of the Virgin as the central sacred figure of the Festivity, displacing St. Joseph to the margin. In fact, if Fallas are associated with any religious figure at all, it must now be the Virgin¹².

The Council organises the Offering, but the Catholic Church is nor represented. The participants, organised by Commissions and neighbourhood’s territorial sections, parade towards the centre of the Square. Women and men, dressed up in their gala costumes, carry flowers to the central image. The figure of the Virgin is a gigantic lattice-work structure of wood, but her body and clothing of the Virgin are made with the flowers that the participants offer in accordance with a rational timetable and scheme of colours. A group of skilled men climb up through the wooden structure to place the flowers artistically. The design of the mantle changes every year. In the words of a Fallera:

‘Every neighbourhood sector brings a colour to compose it. The mantle starts to be constructed. At the beginning the image is there but the mantle is meant to complement it, that is the clothing. Then the sectors arrive on determinate

days, so that I suppose that they may propose that the sector that make the procession the first day should start by building up the clothing with some colours. So the people who have to do it, the expert people who are there, compose it.'

The seven phases of the Offering are:

1. The preparation. The Offering is not understood as a serious religious procession. It has the structure of a neighbourhood parade. Getting the flowers, dressing up and organising the people make it longer than the preparation for an ordinary parade.
2. A relaxed beginning. The participants start moving and keep talking and joking while walking along, sometimes dancing as well (even drinking and smoking). There are not many spectators at this stage.
3. Addressing the Virgin. Each Commission is announced to the large crowd as they arrive via Micalet Street near the Basilica and the name of the Falla and the Fallera Major are spelled out on a public address system. It is a spectacle with a lively atmosphere generated by the crowds. The identity of the Commission and its representative figures is given public recognition.
4. The Offering of Flowers. The participants, particularly women, experience strong feelings when they are delivering the flowers. Many women kiss the flowers, trying to reach the Virgin that way: "Giving your flowers you are giving your heart". Many request things from the Virgin: "I ask for things for my family, health, employment". Many people cry, particularly the women. The feeling is described by the participants as 'mysterious'. When asked to be more specific they say that "It is more mysterious than religious". The importance of the spectators is also mentioned.

5. Winding down. After delivering their flowers the participants process out of the central area stage, leaving the crowds and the square behind. The grouping of each Falla starts to break up as some people go for a drink or a cigarette.
6. The return. The return from the Basilica Square is a 'Carnavalesque parade'. People dance and sing. As I shall show in Chapter 7, the return from the Offering displays the same movements, music and dances as the carnivalesque 'Parade of the Puppets'. As a participant said: "It is an explosion of energy and happiness"
7. Gathering in the Casal for dinner. This is a moment of a joyful togetherness and unity.

There is a contrast between the two basic phases of the Offering: 'going' and 'coming back'. Members clearly differentiate in their mind between the phase of going, which is formal, organised and serious (except for the relaxed beginning), and the phase of 'coming back' which is fully festive. This differentiation is at the same time taken for granted and easily explicated by the participants. Musicians in the bands, folk or brass, have a variety of very different pieces to fit both phases of the Offering: serious and solemn for the first, and happy and popular for the second. This structure of the Offering is therefore very similar to that of the Presentation which is also divided into two parts: one solemn, the other comic.

(c) This two-part pattern changes in relationship with the monument, its setting up and burning. The night of the setting up, the 15th of March, is perhaps the happiest night of the festive period. Fallers and others cook and eat paellas in the streets near the Casal while they wait for the artist to come to 'plant' the monuments. The process takes several hours, and everybody helps the artists. By contrast, the night of the burning, the *crema*, drives people towards melancholy and sadness.

Two Fallas are usually burnt by each Commission: the adults' and the children's monuments. The children's Falla is burnt earlier, about 10 p.m.; the adults' monument is burnt at midnight. The Fallas which have won prizes have the honour of being burnt later. Preparation for the burning takes a very long time. Fireworks are let off near, over and inside the monument. The fire brigade must organise its resources because people get very close to the monuments while they are helping the fireworks handler or the artist, who gets the monument ready for burning in consultation with the fire brigade.

The Fallera Major sets off the fireworks which ignite the monument. Normally, she starts crying afterwards. The brief stage of the burning is the moment which most forcefully brings people together and makes them feel united. It is surprising, but this enormous crowd of people, physically very close to each other, shows no inclination towards violence at all. In fact, the police presence is small and unnoticed. When the monument is fully on fire the Hymn of Valencia is played. This is the time of the highest emotions and unity. Later, after a mysterious time of 'inaction', emptiness and shared melancholy seem to permeate everything. When the monument is reduced to small flames and ashes, people jump over it and dance around it in a circle. From this dance around the fire the Festivity starts to grow again. The Committee resigns, a new President is elected and the Falla starts again.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to Emili Casanova (1990) the word 'Falla' has its origins in the latin *facula*, diminutive of 'fax-facis', meaning 'torch'.

² Freud referred to Frazer's interpretations of representations which included this puppet. For him they are related to his hypothesis about the symbolic repetition of the death of the primitive father. He also refers to Robertson Smith who interprets the sacrifice of a god as a mythic tragedy (Freud, 1967: 196 ff.).

³ Bakhtin (1987: 206) explicitly mentions the relevance of this procession in Spain. He indicates the importance of the grotesque body in it as exemplified by monsters, giants, fancy dress, etc. Pilar Pedraza (1981) also indicates the importance of this procession during the Valencian Baroque period. These very same figures occur today, but Fallas replaced Corpus Christi as the City's main Festival at the turn of this century.

⁴ Joanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanch*, erotic and burlesque debates such as *Lo Process de les Olives*, etc. See Blasco (1990), Pitarch (1982) and Soler (1990).

⁵ Also the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth parts of Hernandez's doctoral thesis (Hernández 1992)

⁶ Between 1993 and 1998, however, there has been a small decrease in formal membership (in the Fallas researched). Ecuador for example went from 253 to 219 members. The recent economic crisis, policies of flexible hours of work and the introduction of 'populistic' private TV channels seem to be among the causes.

⁷ The forms of Valencian associationism are very similar to those of other European countries, particularly the French, during the 19th century: cultural *casinos* and social clubs, music and hunting societies, sporting clubs, etc. (Cucó, 1990: 249)

⁸ Neighbourhood associations decreased between 1980 and 1990 in Spain, while festive associations increased in Valencia. For example, according to Ninyoles, the rate of belonging decreased from 28,7% to 17,0% for neighbourhood civic

associations and increased from 11,4% to 29,3% for festive associations. This means for him that during this period “the festive associations tripled their resources”, while the others suffered a “great decrease”(Ninyoles, R.LL., 1996: 49,53). The festive sociability of the Fallas, as we are going to see in this thesis, is resistant to instrumentalism. Perhaps Castells’ civic neighbourhood associations and ‘civil society’ were not so resistant.

⁹ Ninyoles’s data (1996: 58) on educational certificates show that the level of ‘formal education’ of the Fallas’ members is lower than in other Valencian associations.

¹⁰ Fallas also have a high number of ‘spectators’. Perez de Guzman’s data (1990: 454) show that 63% live the Festival as spectators; 7% live it as Fallers; 20% do not participate; and 10% move out of the City for the Festival period. The total number of spectators is, however, higher because of the many tourists and visitors.

¹¹ Rituals are discussed throughout the whole thesis in connection with their role in the wider context of festive sociability. Here I shall make a brief description of three of them. I have extensively written about the Fallas’ rituals elsewhere (Costa, 1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d)

¹² This marks the limitations of powerful ‘inventors of tradition’ to mobilise people . The Virgin acquired more fervent devotion than St. Joseph when the people had the opportunity to show their preferences. The success of the Offering to the Virgin (and the failure of the Offering to Saint Joseph) demonstrates that the patronage of St. Joseph is no longer taken seriously.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

1. Participant research on the Fallas

The Festivity of the Fallas is massive in the Valencian Region and beyond. It is spread over wide geographical areas (including Fallas abroad) and it is supported by people from all social classes and backgrounds. Fallas have also a network of associations which is co-ordinated by centralising agencies; they have links with modern institutions such as the City Council or schools; they are interwoven with an association of the Fallas' artists; and they are visited by tourists. The nature of the Fallas as a social fact is too broad as a topic for even the most ambitious doctoral researcher. Obviously, I had to narrow the focus of my study.

The criteria which guided my selection of topics for research on the Fallas came from my personal experience in the Fallas and from my theoretical interests. Limitations were also imposed on my research by the distinctiveness of the Fallas' community life and, particularly, by certain aspects of the Fallas' regulations concerning membership.

My personal experience of the Fallas is marked by a slow increase of interest in, and evaluation of, the Festivity. My family usually participated in the local religious festivities but had no tradition of membership in the Fallas. There were no Fallas in Godella, my town, until 1974, but it was a custom in my family to go to the City of Valencia to look at the monuments. Godella is only 7 km. from the centre of the City and is part of the wider Valencian Metropolitan area, so it was easy to be a spectator of the main Festival events organised by the Council of Valencia. Before the

1990s I had lived the Festival as a spectator or as an occasional participant, but I was not fully aware of the richness of the festive sociability in the Commissions. At that stage Fallas were more than anything else the monuments and the crowded celebrations and rituals on the general programme of the City of Valencia. This experience is quite common among people who live the Festival from the point of view of a spectator (see Chapter 5).

My 'immigration' to England (in 1988) to work and study in Warwick changed my attitude towards the Fallas and Festivity in general. After two years of living in Coventry I had identified a lack of 'festivity' and nostalgia for the festive in the Anglo-Saxon world. This lack of festivity clearly contrasted with the liveliness of festivities in my homeland. In 1990 I decided to go back to Valencia, confront the issue and do academic work on Festivity and the Fallas.

My life circumstances helped the academic project. After living in many different towns and cities over a long period I had the opportunity to live in the locality where I had been born, Godella, and in the neighbourhood where I had played when I was a child. When I got to know my childhood friends again I discovered that some of them were members of the neighbourhood Falla, the 'Falla Plaza Dr. Valls', which had been founded in 1974. My personal 're-integration' in my 'original' neighbourhood was almost bound to be associated with the Fallas as well. When I joined the Falla in 1995 I discovered that my case was not exceptional: many recent newcomers to Godella were in the Falla for similar reasons to do with seeking integration into local life. The Falla had become the hearth of the neighbourhood's social life.

By 1990, the neighbourhood had undergone a lot of changes during two decades of rapid 'urbanisation'. The few old houses of the peasantry now stood next to the new, big and cheap blocks of apartments which had arisen out of what used to be fields; large numbers of newcomers from other regions of Spain were now part of the neighbourhood life. The area was populated by the working and lower middle classes. I gradually drew closer to the neighbourhood Falla and discovered that, in contrast to the local religious festivities, the Fallas had a 'mysterious' power to bring people of different backgrounds and origins together. This power of the Fallas seemed to be grounded to a great extent in the distinctive characteristics of their festive sociability.

My view of the Fallas had changed at this stage. I began to hypothesise that the spectacular events, rituals and monuments (which had previously seemed to me to be the essential parts of the Fallas) were only one aspect of an all-embracing permanent festive sociability which was kept going by solid community associations. It seemed to me, however, that their rich sociability could be only grasped if I participated in it. I concluded that the main focus of my research had to be on the Fallas' forms of sociability and that my methodology had to be 'qualitative' and based on personal involvement in the Fallas. The fact that I had been away from the neighbourhood since I was 6 years old helped me to combine familiarity (and memory) with the necessary degrees of distance and strangeness required for studying something subtle and elusive.

The main research questions that I tried to answer were:

1. How can the social bonds of the Fallas best be characterised?
2. What produces the intense kind of sociability found in the Fallas?

3. How are Fallas, as voluntary associations, related to the rest of Valencian society?
4. Do the Fallas represent a tradition under siege by modernity?
5. What role do symbols and rituals play in sustaining and changing the festive sociability of the Fallas?
6. In what sense do the Fallas cultivate their own forms of critical reflexivity and public sphere?

In the light of these questions, the Fallas which interested me most were those which had clearly demonstrated the capacity to bring different people together. The new Fallas of the newly created or re-urbanised neighbourhoods such as the Falla Dr. Valls were, therefore, the most relevant from my point of view. These particular Fallas also gave me the opportunity to examine the kind of ‘emancipation’ which the working class may or may not be seeking in an increasingly affluent Spain. It had been in my mind for a long time that perhaps, putting it in a simple way, the working class might have tried ‘solutions’ other than those which are supposed to be ‘serious’, ‘evolutionist’, ‘uni-lineal’ and ‘universal’. I welcomed the opportunity to witness in my own neighbourhood how the age-old European popular culture of the ‘plebe’ was being transformed in the context of a contemporary working class local culture.

The theoretical background of the thesis made also called for qualitative and participant research methods. The central concepts of festive sociability, reflexivity and public sphere could only be applied (and in some sense ‘tested’) if I was fully involved in the activities which characterised the communal life of the Fallas.

This does not mean that quantitative research would not be legitimate or useful in studies of the Fallas. In fact, I have used quantitative data from other authors to

outline some introductory and general aspects of the Fallas; and I collected other quantitative data myself from the associations that I studied. Statistics can be very useful for some purposes, quantitative research cannot grasp the complexity involved in the central activities of festive sociability such as play, humour, comensalism and festive work. The task of understanding them requires 'living in the tradition'. For example, as I shall show in Chapters 4 and 5, knowledge of when to play and when to work, or the understanding of how humour and comensalism connect with 'sociable work' in daily festive sociability, is learned. It takes time, tact and patience to discover the subtleties of this knowledge.

But not every 'qualitative approach' is well adapted to the spirit of the Festival. Many characteristics of the Fallas' communal life require a hermeneutical and somehow 'festive' approach if one really wants to understand the heart of the Fallas' festive life. For example, the principles of festive sociability, such as the 'equality principle' (see Chapters 4 and 5), would prevent Fallers from giving privileges to any researcher who simply affected higher academic status. This means that the researcher has to be an ordinary member, 'equal' to the others in terms of sociability. Consequently, the research itself has to be 'sociable' and 'festive', appropriate to the collective pursuit of 'sociability values'. Otherwise, the 'distant' researcher would end up being ignored and left to sit in the corner because he or she did not have the Fallers' trust.

Festive sociability is resistant to many of the objectifying mechanisms implicit in some sociological techniques. For example, the playful nature of sociability which deplores instrumental behaviour and the excesses of 'reasoned' argumentation, helps Fallers to reflect on, and satirise, such widespread sociological instruments as

questionnaires and time budgets. This satirical outlook makes Fallas elusive and reflexive regarding sociology. For example, any attempt to practise the kind of 'systematic observations' or highly 'structured interviews' that many methodology text books recommend is likely to end up as a joke in which the researcher is the 'victim'. Since I was 'naive' and inexperienced when I first tried to negotiate my 'access' to the 'field' I was the butt of many jokes which turned on my perseverance with certain forms of 'non-festive sociological observation'. These, and many other, situations clearly revealed distinctive forms of reflexivity which could only be grasped by means of even more intensive participation. Therefore I had to adapt 'normal' techniques as my access improved. I even had to 'invent' my own 'festive techniques' for dealing sociologically with the Fallas.

Understanding the special character of the Fallas' public sphere also called for heavy involvement not only in the associations but also in the artists' workshops. Therefore I worked in the team of the current Falla Dr. Valls' artist's workshop for six months. My extended participant research there helped me to realise the nature of the connections between the Associations and their monuments in terms of sociability, reflexivity and public sphere. For example, it became clear to me that the features of festive sociability were also characteristic of workshop life, that the annual rhythm of festive sociability matched with the rhythm of work on the monuments and that the motifs of European popular culture and the role of myths were essential resources for the artists.

Finally, my methodology was also conditioned by other characteristics of the Fallas' communal life and, particularly, by their regulations concerning membership. These circumstances partially account for my focus on only a small number of Fallas.

On the one hand, as I shall show throughout this study, community commitment and ‘sociable work’ are central to the Fallas. Fallas are very demanding at the level of daily participation in their activities which take place all-year-long. Fallas are also ‘territorial’ organisations which include families and groups of friends from their neighbourhood. All this has consequences for the researcher who has to spend a great deal of time and energy in just one association if he/she wants to follow the rhythm of festive sociability during the year and during the Festival days as well. On the other hand, the Fallas’ general regulations do not permit anyone to be a member of more than one association at the same time. It was only possible for me to participate actively in one association. Of course, I studied other associations and people but without the advantages that membership would have provided. To compensate for this, I visited other sorts of festive settings and institutions and I interviewed many different people.

2. The Fallas researched and other festive settings and institutions. Access and techniques.

The central focus of this research is on two Fallas: (a) the ‘Falla Dr. Valls of Godella’ (25 years old) and (b) the ‘Falla Ecuador-Gurrea’ of the City of Valencia (21 years old). Two other Fallas were systematically researched, but the frequency and intensity of my visits and involvement in them were considerably lower. These were the ‘Falla El Veteró’ and the ‘Falla El Cudol’. These four Fallas belong to the City and the Metropolitan area of Valencia and are part of the predominantly working and lower middle class neighbourhoods that have been recently built or urbanised. The Fallas Dr. Valls, Ecuador and El Cudol are in the Metropolitan area in the north of the City,

while the Falla El Veteró is in the eastern part of the City, near the coast. The many other Associations that I visited included Fallas of every sort and category such as 'old and historical Fallas', 'special category' Fallas, 'experimental Fallas', Fallas of other important cities of the Region and the Fallas of the 'bourgeois' and rich neighbourhoods.

Between 1990 and 1995 my relation with the world of the Fallas strengthened considerably when I decided to conduct a qualitative study. I visited many Fallas during this period in order to become familiar with their types and characteristics. Finally I joined the Falla Dr. Valls in 1995 and between 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 I spent most of my time in this Association. The Falla Ecuador received a greater part of my attention at a later stage.

As I indicated above, the first stage of my access to the 'Falla Dr. Valls' was difficult. My previous experience in field research had been in the area of education where school pupils are, relatively speaking, a 'captive audience' for research. In the Fallas, however, the circumstances are very different mainly because Fallas are a space of 'freedom' for their members who organise their own criteria of a festive community. Moreover, family, friendship and personal relations are very close since they are the main channels of recruitment and initiation. Although I had no family or close friends in the Falla, my chances of obtaining access improved notably when I forgot my previous rules of 'educational research' and made friends in the Association.

The quality of my access improved even more when I started to make my own research 'festive' itself and started to understand the nature of 'festive work'. This entailed agreeing to participate in, and organise, activities. For example, in 1986-1987

I joined the Falla's dance group and started to teach guitar lessons for its children and teenagers. I also wrote parts of the Falla's booklet, the *Llibret*, including the poetry for the children's and adults' Fallera Major. I also undertook the leading role of *mantenidor* in the Presentation. This is the person who makes the speech in praise of the Fallera Major. In short: I only could get the right kind of access when I started to work hard for the festive community. Finally, during the ceremony of the Exaltation (in 1997) I received an award from the Mayoress for my work, on the nomination of the 'Falla Dr. Valls'. My dedication and the award boosted my 'legitimacy' for conducting research in the Association, particularly for interviewing purposes.

My access to the Falla Ecuador was much easier, although I was not a formal member. The reason is that I had a good friend there who was a member of the Falla's General Committee and had all his family in the Falla. I could not join the Association as a member but I was a regular participant in the daily life of the community.

I used 'snowball' sampling to obtain my informants. This form of sampling also proved to be effective enough to reach the elite authorities of the Festival. For example, I was able to interview the main authorities of the Fallas Central Committee by just following a chain of interviews and personal relationships which started in the 'Falla Ecuador'.

In addition to my long participation in the artist's workshop of the Falla Dr. Valls many other workshops were visited; and artists of different quality and characteristics were interviewed. The Artists interviewed include some of the most experienced and 'decorated' in the history of the Festivity. As happened with the civic authorities, I reached them through the most simple 'snowball' paths. Other

informants include religious ministers, visitors, tourists, foreign people living in Valencia (and abroad) and spectators.

The main research techniques were participant observation, interviewing and the collection of documentary evidence. The study includes more than fifty in-depth interviews which provided the most essential data. Photography and video-recording have also been important. Yet, these techniques had to be adapted on many occasions to the characteristics of the Festivity. Participant observation, for instance, had to be very 'sensitive' if it was not to destroy the spontaneity of festive events. Record keeping had to be reduced or suspended during the Festival days, and notes had to be 'reconstructed' later. The intensity of these days made it very difficult to follow the current standards of 'sociological reflexivity'. In-depth interviewing took a number of different forms in the festive context because Fallers have a sociable, spontaneous way of dealing with social interaction. The assumption of a one-to-one interview, which is common in other contexts, does not fit easily with the Fallers' group oriented behaviour. Therefore individual interviews were complemented by group interviews and by 'focus group' discussions. Documentary evidence on the Fallas is very rich. As I shall show in Chapter 6, Fallas keep written records of their activities, but the 'essence' escapes the written word: colour and music are everywhere. This is why photography and video played a central role in my study, although it has not been possible to reflect this in my thesis.

The idiosyncrasy of the Fallas pushes the researcher to discover new 'ways' of trying to do 'justice' to (or not to destroy) festive events and way of life. For example, I had to 'invent' ways of interviewing to fit in with street *tertulias* and other spontaneous gatherings. One of them was partially to convert the *tertulias* into 'focus

group discussions'. It took me some time to learn how to do this without destroying the *tertulia* as a result of my activity. Sociability is uncomfortable with a continuous focus on content or argument. The appropriate methodological response is patience: the '*tertulia* interview' is therefore much longer and disorganised than is normal. But it does have the advantage of witnessing to the power of sociability in speech, especially the way in which Fallers themselves protect the spontaneous play of their talk. The other 'invention' is not mine alone but is shared with my guitar group in the 'Falla Dr. Valls'. I had composed some music for a song about the Falla, and one day we spontaneously began to put words to it. Obviously they wanted to sing about what they stood for. One of our songs appeared in the booklet of the Association. Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis are somehow grounded in these words. These techniques may appear unorthodox in the eyes of some sociologists, but I think that any interpretation of Festivity must allow the people to sing their songs.

CHAPTER III

THEORY: THE SOCIABILITY AND PUBLIC SPHERE OF FESTIVE TRADITIONS

This chapter has two parts: one is constructive, the other is critical. The first is concerned with the orientation of my empirical research on the Fallas. Its key concepts are sociability, festive sociability and public sphere. The sophistication of a contemporary Festivity such as the Fallas, which nevertheless has ancient roots, makes it necessary to draw on a variety of authors and sociological schools in order to construct a workable analytical framework. The second part analyses the social theories of Anthony Giddens and Jürgen Habermas. In both cases, I shall pursue the limitations of their ideas on the transmission of tradition and its interaction with modern life. I shall connect this with their restrictive view of reflexivity and the public sphere.

PART ONE: THE BASIC OUTLINE OF A SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF FESTIVE TRADITION

1. The neglected study of the transmission of tradition

Sociologists have devoted a great deal of work to the institutional and cultural expressions of modernity but a 'sociology of *tradition*' has not been pursued adequately. In particular, the specific forms of the transmission of tradition have not been the object of much attention by sociologists. Edward Shils, exceptionally, noted this lack of understanding of the mechanisms and properties of tradition. He said something that is still probably valid today,

namely, that in contrast with the much studied substantive content of traditions - and with the widespread and frequent use of the terms 'tradition', 'traditional society', etc. - there was a relative lack of sociological interest in looking at how that content is handed down, effectively transmitted and reproduced. He wrote: "the modes and mechanisms of the traditional reproduction of beliefs are left unexamined" (1971: 124). These mechanisms of transmission are at the heart of the persistence of traditions in the midst of change (1971: 122-124).

The lack of an understanding of the transmission of tradition certainly affects our understanding of so-called 'traditional societies' (Shils, 1971: 124). As many traditions persist, change and are elaborated in contemporary life, it seems to me that this lack of analysis hampers our attempts to understand how tradition links with present-day experience. An understanding of the transmission of tradition is consequently fundamental to the characterisation of any type of 'society', collective or community. Present-day society is variously described as modern, post-industrial, late capitalist, post-modern, post-national, post-traditional, advanced and global but how many of these descriptions have been able to explain the mechanisms of persistence and transformation of traditions? How many of these new labels may take for granted the way tradition is transmitted? Without a clarification of the properties and mechanisms of transmission of tradition these theoretical perspectives cannot deal with the sort of experiences, social relations and collectives, which, like the Fallas, combine traditional and modern practices. Consequently, the properties and forms of transmission of tradition should be taken into account in any social theory.

This lack of analysis of the forms of transmission of tradition has an obvious consequence: it is commonly assumed that a contrast exists between tradition and

modernity. What is needed, however, is empirical research to investigate the particular relationships between the forms of transmission of traditions and the institutional and cultural features of modern life. The understanding of tradition can no longer be based on the prejudice that it is a sort of residual category, merely representing continuous and unthinking repetition in contradistinction to modernity characterised by reasoning, reflexivity and originality¹. Tradition, as we are going to see in this study, is always interwoven with the present, integrating many features of it into its own developing framework, some of them being typically modern. Moreover, the properties and forms of transmission are more flexible and malleable than they have often been thought to be. Tradition also has its own form of reflexivity which is not characterised by the criteria of modern rationality, science and technology. However, the reflexivity of tradition may incorporate many aspects of modern and contemporary reflexivity as a secondary feature which helps to update the tradition itself. This interweaving of past and present has been said to correspond to a 'translation'². I want to emphasise again here that this 'translation', produced at the very heart of sociable activities, is not made for the purpose of putting these activities into modern terms, but must be seen in the context of the tradition itself, as a coming to terms of the tradition with present-day experience. Therefore the core of the mechanisms of transmission of tradition lies in the 'sociability' of the community that sustains and, at the same time, reflexively renews it by incorporating features of modern life.

The approach I am going to present here is primarily based on key concepts of phenomenological hermeneutics and on George Simmel's work on sociability. It will include other authors in its development. The core of this

study is illuminated by one central idea and two derivative ones. First: *the artistic and playful nature of sociability may be interpreted as 'festive sociability' in the context of a community that reflexively 'takes care' of the festivity as a tradition.* Second: *festive sociability has a specific public sphere as an expression of its reflexivity, which incorporates play and art.* Third, *festive traditions, as 'substantial traditions', are not necessarily opposed to modern forms of experience and reflexivity, but can incorporate them as part of the dialogue that tradition establishes with present-day experience.* This is a richer dialogue than the one that characterises modern rationality and its public sphere as understood by authors such as Habermas and Giddens.

The rest of this section is devoted to developing these core ideas. In the first part I shall be concerned with the key concepts of phenomenological hermeneutics, such as the World or the Event (*Ereignis*). The second part of this section will deal with Simmel's ideas about sociability. I will then elaborate the concept of 'festive sociability', drawing on authors such as Bakhtin, Huizinga, Freud, Bergson and Durkheim. The 'organisation' of festive sociability will be explained partly in terms of Bataille's ideas about Festivity. Thirdly, I shall characterise the 'symbolic universe' and sense of transcendence that accompany festive sociability and its public sphere in the Fallas of Valencia. The rituals, ceremonies, celebrations and symbols that go to the heart of the Festival will be clarified with the aid of the French sociology of the sacred, but other authors, such as Berger and Luckmann, Heidegger, Frazer and Freud, will play a part. Finally I shall look at the distinctiveness of the popular, artistic and satirical public sphere that is part of the festive sociability of the Fallas. Heidegger's

work on the 'public thing' and Bakhtin's characterisation of European popular culture will be fundamental.

2. Hermeneutics and festivity

Phenomenological hermeneutics give a prominent place to concepts that play an important part in the understanding of 'festive traditions'. Some of these are tradition, memory, festivity, celebration, play, art and poetics, the sacred, the community, care and the 'public thing'. Hermeneutics is unique in one respect: festivity is not only a topic for discussion but also a basis for access to the World. The festive manner of accessing things, disclosing and understanding them, in conjunction with related activities such as art and poetry, is given precedence over scientific, technological and 'informational language'.³

The ontology of hermeneutics, its manner of understanding how things and beings are constituted, is based on a particular conception of the 'World' (Heidegger, 1994: 131) and its four-fold composition. This World is not only composed of humans and their actions. In fact, hermeneutics is reluctant to give the centre stage to human beings and their social communities as agents for re-making this World. Three other elements mutually interact with the human community: the earth, the sky and divinities. How do these elements of Heidegger's 'Four-fold' interact with each other?

Scientific notions of cause and effect are alien to Heidegger's 'Four-fold'. The rules generating their links are more 'gentle'. Play and dance, art and poetry, orchestrate these relationships. This idea of the world is holist: each of the Four displays the other three in itself as well as the whole of their mutual relations. In the next section, I shall interpret the playful and artistic realm of

sociability (Simmel) as part of that 'gentle' influence, operated through art and play, that the Four exercises on the social community through their ties that bind.

Reflexivity and memory are connected to the rhythms of the festive movement which becomes more intense during the days of the Festivity. It produces what Heidegger (1995: 243; 1982: 71,77) calls the 'Event of Appropriation', *Ereignis*, which is also characteristic of the work of art. Festivities constitute *Ereignis*. They are the setting for "the reciprocal relation between the divinities and the community, which takes them together to their proper grounding and foundation".

(a) The Event generates the first meaning of reflexivity in the Festivity. It also takes the form of remembrance in relationship with reflexivity. The festive event is a process, a movement that pushes towards a re-making, and a new re-union, of the bonding of the ties of the Four-fold. This means that the Event is more than anything the community's attempt to gain a higher 're-cognition' of itself, as an exercise of remembrance.⁴ The 'thingness' of things is thereby made to appear more clearly.

The Event however only covers the Festival days. Although Heidegger's and Gadamer's (1991) theories of the Festivity are very rich they also raise difficulties. Hermeneutics will need several corrections and some supplemental ideas. The main difficulties, as with most of the literature on Festivity, are associated with the narrow concentration on the 'festive days' and the time of the celebrations. This limitation makes it essential for me to produce a theoretical analysis of festive reflexivity throughout the whole year. Hermeneutics cannot make sense of the all-year-long, complex structure of the sociability of the festive community, its 'organisation' and its 'festive work'. I have tried to solve these problems with the aid of a festive

interpretation of the concept of 'care', which Heidegger uses in a more general sense, for art and poetry. It is also possible to develop within hermeneutics a connection between remembrance and daily activities. The concept of 'festive sociability' will provide me with the opportunity of analysing these all-year-long axial grounds of the mechanisms of transmission of the festive tradition. The central activities of festive sociability include care and remembrance. These activities also have a place for 'sociable work' in the Festivity and other resource generating strategies and administrative procedures for its ongoing construction and organisation (Bataille 1991).

I interpret the Festive Event, which takes place during the Festival days, as the object of care of the festive community. This is the interesting 'object' of festive sociability. The festive celebration is the only case in which sociability has sociability itself (an intensification of it) as its content and shared project. Therefore reflexivity and memory may be extended beyond the festive days of the periodic Festival Event by being interpreted in the context of that "community care". For example, the active exercise of remembrance and reflexivity also develops into the daily life of the Casal's sociability, and so does the Falla's public sphere for they both involve collective discussions about the public things of the neighbourhood, city or country.

(b) I understand the reflexivity of festive tradition in a second sense as the active knowledge which the social community possesses and transmits by means of its sociability in order to 'take care' of the cyclical construction of the festivity itself and of its associated artistic works.

(c) The active side of a festive community relies then on a wide experience of its World. In the language of phenomenology, this may be read as a ‘thematization’ which relies on the taken for granted knowledge of the social world. But here I am trying to identify a way of understanding ‘thematization’ in a wider sense, which would not exclude art, play and the festive. In this way it would not be restricted to being merely an ‘answer’ to particular problems in the social world.⁵

Festive sociability provides a bridge between the ‘active’ and the cumulative background of worldly experience. This is produced through active remembrance, which is exercised through the non-instrumental, playful and artistic activities of sociability. The power of Festivity to re-make the memory of tradition is based on recurrent social activities such as games, play, poetry, music, offering flowers, fireworks, jokes and comensalism.

(d) Festive-artistic reflexivity, as a playful source of broad thematisations, is also associated with what Heidegger (1995: 67) called ‘preliminary’ and ‘reflexive knowledge’. This is the fourth meaning of festive reflexivity. This specific knowledge, deposited in the World, is the result and condition, of the skilfully learned practice of active thematization. It also includes management of the link between daily thematisations and periodic Events. This sort of knowledge is shared by the participants who differ in relationship to their degree of expertise. Knowledge, in this sense, amounts to ‘ideal’ of the festive tradition, as a part of the World. Elderly people and experienced festive actors, as Shils said, are normally highly skilful practitioners of the daily activities of the tradition. Heidegger’s ‘preliminary knowledge’

concerns the place of artists and the festive community's own capacity for 'care'. This form of knowledge also structures time and space so that participants know the proper sequence of events.

Finally I must consider the festive community. Both Heidegger (1982: 61) and Gadamer (1991: 99 ff.), when depicting the essential nature of Festivity, see it as a 'bringing together' which is contrasted to any form of separation, segregation and isolation. For Gadamer it represents a community which cannot divide people: "The Festivity rejects any form of isolation between one person and the other. The Festivity is community, it is the most complete presentation of the community itself. The Festivity is always Festivity for all the people. Then, we say that 'someone excludes himself' if he doesn't participate (1991: 99). This power of the Festivity to bring people together is not 'coercive' but is a "shared intention that binds everybody and renders impossible a disintegration into fragmentary dialogues or a dispersion into individual experiences"(1991: 101).

From a hermeneutical point of view, the main source of separation and isolation is work due to its orientation to the instrumental ends of an activity. Thus Festivity, as a congregation of all, opposes itself to work which is said to "separate and divide us" (Gadamer, 1991: 99-100). Heidegger is no less intent on making a contrast between work and days of celebration (1982: 59). However, as we shall see later, the participants in the Fallas congregate together precisely to work for festive purposes in a context of festive sociability. This shows a deficiency in hermeneutics and other literature on Festivity which fails to see how non-isolating work, administration and the generation of resources can be incorporated into the Festivity. Festivity is a construction and an ongoing form of social life which is permanent for

the Fallas. These aspects may be understood better with the help of Simmel's ideas about sociability and Bataille's theory of Festivity.

3. Sociability and 'festive sociability'

Simmel identified a special sociological form, which corresponded to that of art and play, and called it sociability: "Within this constellation called society, or out of it, there develops a special sociological structure corresponding to those of art and play, which draw their form from these realities but nevertheless leave their reality behind them" (1971: 128). After this initial definition he elaborates further affinities between sociability, art and play. I shall briefly summarise them in six sub-sections, sometimes enriching them with ideas from the previous sections or anticipating points that occur later.

(a) Sociability is a "basic impulse in men". It is independent of the special content, and interest, of an association to which people may belong, just in the same way as there is a common impulse in play and art which is independent of the particularity of each work of art or game. The impulse of sociability drives or gives form to the "pure form" of association, to its values and satisfactions: "But above and beyond their special content, all these associations are accompanied by a feeling for, by a satisfaction in, the very fact that one is associated with others and that the loneliness of the individual is resolved into togetherness, a union with others" (Simmel, 1971: 128). Of course, Simmel indicates that the objectives of an association also matter, and that they may interact with sociability. But he intends to show that sociability itself is more basic than its content or interests. Sociability is then the purest and most "free-playing" form of association.

(b) Sociability, as the “play-form of association”, is contrasted to “superficial rationalism” which finds significance only in content, reducing the “symbolically playing fullness of life” to it. Simmel indicates that this is why rationalists scorn sociability as an “empty idleness”. In his search for content, Simmel continues ironically, a rationalist acts as “did the savant who asked concerning a work of art, ‘What does that prove?’”. He concludes by emphasising that in many languages ‘society’, *Gesellschaft*, means a ‘social gathering’, a party (Simmel, 1971: 129). Content is far from being the most essential thing in social life. In earlier times “man did not depend so much upon the purposive, objective content of his associations”. Purposiveness and content are something typically modern: “modern life is overburdened with objective content and material demands”⁶. This, certainly helps to locate sociability closer to the domain of the festive. But I just would like to anticipate here that this character of sociability, and of festive sociability, will form part of my criticism of Habermas’s claim that reflexivity is associated with a process of *negotiating validity claims* which relies heavily on *content*. This modern prejudice about the nature of social life neglects sociability and consequently the core mechanism for transmitting festive traditions.

(c) Sociability, as a whole, resists dilution into the shattered experiences and characteristics of individuals. This is also a particular quality of that congregational character which hermeneutics also ascribed to celebrations. For Simmel the essence of tact rests here, constraining the basic, impulsive demands of the ego that breaks the limits that the “rights of the others require”. This also means that the individual cannot give expression to his or her objective personal qualities completely:

“In sociability, whatever the personality has of objective importance, of features which have their orientation toward something outside the circle, must not interfere. Riches and social position, learning and fame, exceptional capacities and merits of the individual have no role in sociability or, at most, as a slight nuance of that absence of materiality with which alone reality dares penetrate into the artificial structure of sociability”. When sociability loses its dominion over content or over these individualistic demands then it becomes formal and instrumental, “a formalistic and outwardly instrumental principle”(Simmel, 1971:130-131).

Fallas embody this quality of sociability, which is also linked with a sort of democratic principle of sociability.

(d) Sociability has a principle of democracy and equality. For Simmel, there is a “principle of sociability” based on play that displays the democratic structure of all sociability. He defines the principle like this: “everyone should guarantee to the other that maximum of sociable values (joy, relief, vivacity) which is consonant with the maximum of values he himself receives”. The peculiarity of this principle, according to Simmel, and what makes it different from the Kantian ethical imperative, is that the democracy of sociability continues being a play and excludes the lack of reciprocity thanks to its “own immanent nature”, that is, play itself (1971; 132). The main internal boundary in the Falla, which separates the active Fallers from the ‘Fallers of four days’, depends on this perception of sociable democracy.

A sense of ‘equality in sociability’ is also associated with this democratic principle. As association is reducible to interaction, it follows that equality and the democracy of sociability govern the model of people’s interaction in sociability. The

purest “sociable interaction” is among equals. Again, this is due to the playful and artistic nature of sociability which occurs in that free movement and equivalence of elements that characterises the interaction of equals. For Simmel it works as a game which leads people to give up objective content and which reduces the “strong, outstanding person” to the same level as the weaker to pursue “sociability values” (Simmel, 1971: 133-134). Festive actors will experience a dissonance when someone does not play the game well by, for example, flaunting his/her full status or economic power in the context of a sociable activity, or *vice versa*, when someone tries, for instance, to use the Falla’s sociable values for non-festive or instrumental purposes.

(e) Conversation in sociability has the same quality as sociability itself. The ‘sociable’ conversation is for its own sake: “in sociability talking is an end in itself”. For Simmel this is perhaps the only case in which talk has such legitimacy. The very same linguistic expressions that in other serious and businesslike contexts would put emphasis on content, argument, search for truth, norms recognised by the participants and the finding of shared convictions, “which they wish to impart or about which they want to come to an understanding” would, for him, “take in sociability their meaning in themselves”. Speech is used playfully in sociability. It plays with itself and with the social relations it establishes in interaction. This does not mean that content does not matter but that the content loses its independent weight and is subordinated to the playful exercise of talk which merely focuses attention on the relationship itself.⁷

(f) Sociability, like art, is reflexive and emancipating. On this point Simmel is closer to hermeneutics. Sociability is not only a form but is also constituted by individuals in interaction. For him it is also a symbol of life whose source of energy is the vitality of real individuals. Thus, sociability helps people to gain a better

understanding of reality, of the “depths and wholeness of life”. As in art and play, sociability also creates that “distance” between sociability and real life. It is a distance that makes it possible to be out of life and in it at the same time. This is the distance that in art, for Simmel, reveals the secret of life: “precisely in this state of removal from all immediate reality, its deeper nature can appear more completely, more integrated and meaningful, than any attempt to comprehend it realistically and without taking distance”. Also, this distance entails for him a quality that sociability shares with art and play. Sociability is a *pharmakos*, “an emancipating and saving exhilaration” (1971: 139-140).

This point, as in general Simmel’s characterisation of sociability, is fundamental if the reflexivity of festive sociability is to be located in the all-year-long active construction of the Festivity by the community who take care of it. The emphasis of hermeneutics on the ‘festive days’, when the Event occurs, can therefore be supplemented by Simmel’s consideration of sociability as reflexive and liberating. On the other hand, these emancipating qualities of sociability will be shown to flourish in the Fallas in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Sociability takes specific forms in festive traditions. I call this sociability of the Festivity ‘festive sociability’. It may be understood as a particular case of sociability in Simmel’s terms because, for him, any other activity which has a sociologically playful and artistic form may be subsumed under ‘sociability’. ‘Festive sociability’ has a distinct nature: its content and aims, i.e. the celebration, are also sociable. This is something that multiplies the ‘sociability of sociability’ and so perhaps ‘the celebration of the celebration’ as well. In fact, I shall show in Chapter 4 how festive sociability radicalises the central features of sociability.

The agents of festive sociability are groups of families and friends.

Hermeneutics gives priority to friendship (Heidegger, 1982: 61 ff.) and the group itself, understood as a community that celebrates. Shils attributed importance to handing down tradition among the elderly, especially in the family (1971: 158). Simmel's account of sociability includes both. In his brief example about the evolution of sociability in knightly *fraternities* he wrote about their founding *friendly* patrician *families* (emphasis mine). Simmel insists, however, that "sociable relations" "with-one-another and for-one-another" are the basic mechanism for reproducing sociability, while its content may change over time (1971:138). Community associations such as Fallas add the territorial factor of neighbourhood to an initial network of friendly families and other groups of close friends.

We shall see in this study, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5, how festive sociability is anchored in a community and how that sociability is a social leveller and binder of families, friends, neighbours and visitors. We will also look at how sociability binds 'vertical' age groups and 'horizontal' groups of locals and newcomers by its non-instrumental basis, shared joy and sociable tasks. Differences, and boundaries, will exist, but there will be a more powerful force which joins them together, sometimes in tension, but always making them something that positively matters, and 'counts', for the development of the common festive project.

The central activities of festive sociability now have to be specified. Unfortunately, Simmel restricts his consideration only to the example of play itself, which he sees assuming "a large place in the sociability of all epochs", and concentrates basically on the social game. This does not mean he does not make interesting remarks, for instance that prizes are secondary to the game itself. Many

other examples are mentioned without an explanation, such as the telling of tales or anecdotes (Simmel, 1971: 134, 137). However, as I intend to situate sociability in the specific context of a festive tradition, it is necessary to look at a wider range of festive activities. The central activities of the permanent 'festive sociability' of the Falla are play, humour, festive work and comensalism (see Chapter 5 for a more extended analysis).⁸ Other associated aspects which are more intensive during the final festive days, such as parades, ephemeral art, symbols and transcendence, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

J. Huizinga (1972) connects *play* with art and Festivity, claiming that play constitutes a key anthropological foundation that guides cultural reproduction in general. One of the most interesting aspects of Huizinga's work for our study is the case of repartee, the 'joke competitions', as well as rivalries involving a *Potlach*. They are deeply rooted in several cultures. He explains some of them as a form of the many playful fights and competitions that may take place at the solstice Festivals.

Huizinga takes account of the agonistic foundations of culture in play but Freud and Bergson provide a theory of humour, jokes and laughter that may be linked with the previous ideas about sociability by emphasising their playful-artistic and liberating qualities. Consequently, psychoanalytical theory plays a role in my account by showing that the reflexive, emancipating and therapeutic processes of sociability are central to "making memory". Jokes constitute a social and collective dimension of remembering, while keeping attention on that "wholeness of life" whose depth they scrutinise playfully. This is because joking in sociable settings instantaneously creates a distance between the playful encounter and current life. Jokes have a double, reflexive insight into the World's wholeness: they activate memory in relationship

with current life. By doing so, they incorporate the unconscious into communicational structures, and so again show the limitations of any approach to communication which, as in Habermas, would reduce it to modern argumentation.

Comensalism, and its accompanying conversational and physical actions, is central to festive sociability. Fallas display the main characteristics of the ‘popular banquet’ which Bakhtin describes (1987: 250). Eating also calls forth a sense of community. The regular weekly shared meal, as a communion of the participants who care for festive tradition, anticipates and concretises the main events and celebrations of the Festival, reinforcing at the same time the ‘hope’ (or faith) of the community that its collective project will be accomplished. This means that sharing a meal, as an effervescent assembly, also reinforces the collective energy that Durkheim (1982: 313) saw as central for the reproduction and renewal of a group’s social relationships. Eating together constitutes a model of sociable group interaction, of its unity and of the equality of the members.

Work exists in the context of Festivity. Working in an atmosphere of festive sociability is, for the festive actors, different from the work they do as employees. The relevant literature seems, however, to draw a contrast between work and festivity. This contrast does not correspond to reality, at least in the case of the Fallas. My participation in the Fallas’ year-long preparation clearly showed that there is a specific structure of ‘work in sociability’, which is neither instrumental nor isolating, but constitutes one of the central activities of ‘care’ of the festive community. This ‘sociable work’ is an important omission from the literature on Festivity. Durkheim’s understanding of Festivity is also confined to festive days. He does not consider ‘sociable work’ at all. In fact, the only author who, as far as I know, has seen the

mutual implication between work and festivity is Bakhtin. It occurs in relationship with festive banquets, for collective eating is a consequence of collective work: they are closely connected. In Antiquity, images of meals sometimes replaced those of work, according to Bakhtin (1987: 253). But Bakhtin does not analyse festive work in the general context of Festivities nor in contemporary popular festivals. My point is that festive and 'sociable work' is vital for the maintenance of tradition and is the fundamental core of the reflexivity of tradition and of its potential to adapt to change. We shall see in Chapter 4 how this type of work establishes a peculiar synthesis which combines modern and traditional forms of labour.

Sociable festive work is also important for another reason. It includes an active knowledge that I shall call, with Bataille (1991), the 'operational side of the Festivity'. This 'operational' aspect of the Festivity was neglected by hermeneutics, which concentrated basically on celebration. It links the festive to current economic and administrative procedures. But sociability and its caring activities should have a prior and leading role which creates a context for the generation of resources and administrative procedures and keeps them subordinate. As we shall see in Chapter 6, rational accountancy and formal organisation are vital for the year-long process of creating Festivity but they only operate within limits established by festive sociability.

I shall sketch some of Bataille's main ideas. Festivity is not for him totally incompatible with the current manner of generating resources in a society. Festivity also has what he calls an "operational side" and is therefore "integrated as a part in the chain of the useful things". (Bataille, 1991:58). This happens because the festive is in a "real community" and is "integrated in the timing of this community"(1991:59). Economic and administrative resources contribute to the construction of festivity but

they are subordinated to the Festivity itself and depend on its own festive 'movement'. This is characterised by 'festive spending', a specific form of gift consumption which can be understood as *Potlach*. In general, however, it is the sacrificial offering that matters. The exemplar is the fire sacrifice: "This is what the Festivity (the fire sacrifice, the firing of things) consciously is, subordinated to the time of the common things, which then pushes the festivity not to last long" (1991: 59). This last idea persuaded me to make a correction for the failure of hermeneutics to take account of festive economics and administrative procedures. These are very important if we do not want to reduce Festivity entirely to those days of 'festive celebrations', for this is something that hermeneutics (and perhaps Durkheim too) tend to do. Instead, we need to consider the Festivity as an ongoing year-round activity with a permanent form of sociability which includes resourcing and organisation.

Bataille's idea that sacrificial offering is the centre of Festivity is compatible with Heidegger's emphasis on offering as the nucleus of the 're-moval' that occurs in festive Events. The transformations of festive sociability which account for the changes that intervene between 'collection' and 'consumption' are interpreted in Chapter 6 on the basis of these two ideas. They are also the context for looking at the Falla's symbolic universe.

4. Symbols, transcendence and the public sphere

For Heidegger the festive Event included a mutual offering between the community and the divinities. Let me introduce two of his other ideas. First: art has its place in the Event (1995: 71). This means that festivity and art are mutually linked. Play also has a

fundamental function as in any process of movement of the Four-fold. Festivity therefore becomes an enclave where links between the Four can be intensified. Their effervescent movement includes art and play, with a relationship to the sacred through offering. I shall develop these ideas with the help of Bakhtin and French theories of the sacred⁹. Fallas' symbols and sense of transcendence can therefore be interpreted as 'manifesting' a festive ideal which comes to grips with the wholeness of life through the ephemeral.

Festivities are also occasions for commemorating and creating memories about communities, thereby inducing a kind of reflexive recognition of them. In this sense, Festivity is not alien to the public sphere. The festive dynamics of re-modelling the 'thing' as 'public thing' are an essential preliminary to the formation of a special public sphere which does not exclude the playful and the artistic. The predominant understanding of the public sphere, as something related to the literary and enlightened bourgeoisie and the institutions of the modern state (such as in Habermas), will be called into question with the help of Bakhtin's work on features of European popular culture and of Heidegger's search for a wider conception of the 'public thing', the *res publica*. Festivities are contexts for the renewal of the *res*, the 'thing', a matter of common concern to a collectivity and therefore something to be talked about (Heidegger, 1994:152). I shall link these ideas to five points.

(i) First, festive sociability lies behind rituals, constituting a necessary condition for their development. Festive traditions cannot be reduced to their rituals, but their essential feature is a community or group movement of collective effervescence. As I have shown, festivities are constructed during a preparatory phase of sociable interaction, something that hermeneutics and Durkheim failed to see. But,

and this is a coincidence, both approaches also place festive rituals in a broader range of activities that are developed by a group or community during festive time. For Durkheim, festive rituals not only have a 'serious side' but are also linked in a complex and ambiguous manner with play, art and the festive, which may include 'profane' activities as well.

This general principle which I shall call 'the foundation of effervescent festive sociability' applies to any festivity, but, I want to emphasise here, it is even more fundamental and clearly noticeable, as Durkheim says, in popular festivals. Bakhtin would obviously agree with Durkheim in the case of European popular festivals which generally feature activities of a Carnavalesque sort. They are more distanced from the 'serious' than are 'religious Festivities'. More than rituals, for example, what matters in Carnival is the throwing of an enormous banquet, which is the natural way to conclude collective work. The shared meal is also a joyful *symposium*, a place to mix talking with eating and drinking: "bread and wine eliminate fear and liberate language". Talking at the table also constitutes for Bakhtin the paradigm of equality, that I characterised as 'the democratic principles of sociability'. For instance, it breaks social hierarchies and polarities, such as the sacred-profane or body-spirit.

Conversation and food in the popular festival also mean festive humour and the universality of laughter (Bakhtin, 1987: 250). These core activities of festive sociability occur all year round in present-day popular Festivals such as the Fallas but are intensified and amplified during Festival days.

(ii) Second, the emphasis of hermeneutics on the commemorative character of celebrations finds an echo in the Durkheimian tradition. Festivities are an opportunity for groups to re-cognise themselves and to reaffirm their identity. Durkheim considers

Festivity as traditions that up-date the myths of the ancestors, recalling the past to make it present through dramatic representations. This mythology is the core of the shared beliefs in the group which are expressed through a tradition that keeps its memories alive by dramatising them. This is also a way of reinvigorating the consciousness of the group and its unity and of consolidating its social bonds (1982: 346). For example, the Fallas makes use of mythology, particularly in the monuments which amount to static satirical dramatisations by juxtaposing old myths and grotesque bodies and the celebrities and settings of present-day life.

(iii) Third, Festivities have links with the natural change of the seasons.

Durkheim, like Heidegger and Bakhtin, takes account of nature's association with the festive. When Durkheim (1982: 324) considers the periodical recurrence of sacrifice in the festive cycle, he acknowledges that the natural factors, "the rhythm of cosmic life" are interwoven with the rhythm of social life: "The changes of seasons constitute critical epochs for nature, so they are a natural occasion to meet...". He argues that this natural rhythm has great powers of persistence and that it is even present in many Christian festivals which overlap with earlier pastoral and agrarian festivals. However, March is precisely the month of the transitory and ephemeral according to Heidegger (1982: 83). As we shall see, this temporal setting underlies many of the Falla's symbols and is widely present in the Festivity. The Christian elements introduced into the old Fire Festival have not altered this persistent and key role of natural rhythms.

(iv) Fourth, Festivities are associated with a ritual of sacrifice. It includes, in the French understanding of it, both a communion and an offering. I shall call it here a 'sacrificial offering' to underline its nature of 'giving', which is very relevant in the case of the Fallas (Bataille, 1991:47; Durkheim, 1982: 324). This is the central ritual

of the festive period, but it is also the oldest and the most characteristic. As I said in the Introductory Chapter, it has undergone substantial transformation and has been complemented by many other subsidiary rituals and by a multiplicity of playful and artistic acts and imaginative, if not fantastic, festive features¹⁰. This ritual structures those festive contents which preserve a place, even if secondary, for sociability itself. In its current form the ritual of the ‘offering’ still accounts for the presence of some of the fundamental symbols of the Festival, such as fire, the Phoenix or the *ninots*, the puppets which make up the monuments. On the other hand, the same ritual underlies one of the essential elements of the Fallas’ public spheres namely, the monument’s satirical criticisms.

(v) Bakhtin mentions several ancient genres of Carnavalesque criticism such as maxims, dialogues, anecdotes, short farces, satires and tragedies which make up the literary background of tradition (Bakhtin, 1987: 92 ff.). It developed during the Middle Ages as an answer to the asceticism of the official and serious religious culture. During this period it was central in Festivities as a sort of inverse ‘satiric drama’ on official Christian doctrines (Bakhtin, 1987: 84). It grew stronger in the Renaissance in sophisticated literary works such as Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. The restriction of laughter and the misunderstanding of Rabelais started with the Enlightenment and its lack of historical sense. The “universality of laughter” is replaced by a unilateral movement towards an abstract and rational utopianism with a tendency to mechanicism and abstract typification. So the universality of laughter which pervaded popular festivals could not be understood from the perspective of post-Enlightenment theory (Bakhtin, 1987: 106 ff.).

As I shall show in Chapter 8, Fallas retain this ancient sense of satire in their monuments and in sociability, thereby forming the basis for their public sphere. A first distinctive feature of that popular culture is the grotesque use of the body, based on the “principle of the material and corporeal life”, which exposes the limitations of the kind of asceticism which is opposed to its spiritual ideals.

A second feature of European popular culture is its focus on sex and reproduction in the context of a cyclical conception of life which reconciles apparent opposites, particularly birth and death, in a mood of renewal. Some of the intellectual transformations that occurred in the 18th century, but especially in the origins of Romanticism, are not alien to this culture according to Bakhtin:

“Death is, in this view, an entity of life, a necessary phase and condition of permanent renovation and rejuvenation. Death is always in correlation with birth, the tomb with the earthy breast which procreates. Birth-death and death-birth are the constitutive phases of life, as the spirit of the Earth of Goethe’s Faust expresses it. Death is included in life and determines its movement, corresponding to birth. The grotesque view interprets the fight of life and death in the body of the individual as the fight of the resisting old life against the new growing one, as a crisis of change” (Bakhtin, 1987: 51).

Fallas retains this central emphasis on sex and reproduction. They are uninhibited about portraying grotesque, exaggerated genitalia as well as highlighting the contrast between bodies of different ages.

Third, popular festivals are for Bakhtin a free space in which to do silly, crazy things and to act like buffoons.¹¹ These nonsensical practices, which had already been noticed by Durkheim, constitute “the free wisdom of the Festivity, emancipated from

all the rules and obligations of the official world, and of its preoccupations and seriousness as well”¹². This apology for buffoonery and nonsense - if strong it is called a *diablada*; if weak it may be a *chorrada* - is habitual both in the Falla’s monuments and during the effervescent festive sociability of the Festival period. Their relevance for the public sphere varies, however, because their main purpose is collective joy. Many of these kinds of buffoonery have a sharp critical side, while others may be more childish.

Summary

Festive sociability establishes a constant interplay between tradition and the present-day. It is the core of the mechanisms by which festive traditions are transmitted. This does not mean that other institutions, contemporary and traditional, have no part in the process. Modern institutions such as schools, or the City Council or older ones such as the family or the guilds also play a role in the transmission of festive tradition. Festive traditions can therefore be considered as something more flexible and malleable than they were thought to be. They are renewed by using new elements taken from contemporary life with which they merge to create a new synthetic experience. The reflexivity of the festive community has its own public sphere.

Festive actors are highly skilful in creating these overlapping and synthetic practices that are needed for Festivity. The idea that a gulf separates festive traditions and modern reflexivity and contemporary life is alien to the festive actors themselves because they honour the age-old ways of participating in a celebration.

PART TWO: THE MELANCHOLY AND THE FESTIVE: A CRITICISM OF GIDDENS AND HABERMAS ¹³

Having established the distinctiveness of the sociability to be found in festive traditions I must now ask how far the dominant sociological ideas about the fate of tradition in the modern world can throw light on this sociability. For this purpose, I shall concentrate on assessing Anthony Giddens's and Jürgen Habermas's perspectives on tradition. Their work is an influential indicator of how far 'the festive' continues to be absent from present-day sociology. In both cases my criticism is the same: a restricted view of the role of tradition and its mechanisms of transmission corresponds with a diminished understanding of reflexivity and its public sphere. Their theories cannot fully account for the characteristics of festive sociability and its public sphere. They cannot explain the manner in which a festive tradition provides an experience that incorporates the modern and contemporary. As a result, traditions have a poorly defined relationship with modernity. Also, both authors draw on very little empirical research to justify their views.

Corresponding with this lack of concern for the mechanisms of transformation of traditions, both authors tend to subordinate tradition to their models of reflexive justification and legitimisation in a modern public sphere, which is characterised by modern dialogical reason. These very same pre-established models of reflexivity are used to explain how traditions decline, persist or transform. In so doing both Giddens and Habermas are unable to see the specific mechanisms of transmission of festive traditions such as the Fallas, which include a special type of reflexivity and public sphere. I shall argue that festive traditions, as substantial traditions, may however

embody features of modern reflexivity as part of a new synthesis of tradition itself which is not necessarily opposed to modernity.

GIDDENS: LIVING IN (MAKING A) POST- FESTIVE SOCIETY

Reflexivity and public sphere without art and festivity

Anthony Giddens (1979,1984, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) situates reflexivity basically at three levels: agency, the link of agency with institutional settings and in the reflexive construction of the biographical project. In the three cases his picture of reflexivity is mainly characterised by an emphasis on the cognitive and informational capacities of social actors. Also, the emotional aspects of behaviour are connected with his understanding of reflexivity. Cognitive and informational reflexivity is present in his account of the 'reflexive monitoring of action' at the discursive and practical levels (1984: 3ff). But norms also play a part. Giddens's idea of reflexivity basically comes from his interpretation of the ethno-methodological understanding of norms (1984: 23).

According to Giddens, then, the activity of social actors in institutional settings may be accountable, so that 'institutional reflexivity' can produce a 're-skilling', which is required if the experience sequestered by expert and abstract systems is to be re-appropriated. The failure to re-appropriate experience may generate compulsions and a need to reconstruct biography through therapy (1991: 179). This is an example of the manner in which reflexivity is also present in the reflexivity of the self, as a biographical project, and so implies morality and autonomy (1991: 71ff). The perspective of reflexivity here is also ethical and political, being connected to a "politics of existence". There are other examples of reflexivity in

matters concerning the body, such as in diets and health regimes (1991: 99). In these cases reflexivity is not only cognitive but is also linked with emotions. Even institutional reflexivity links the cognitive with the emotional: “As I would understand institutional reflexivity, it virtually always has some relationship to emotions; it is not just cognitive at all”(1994b: 197).

Institutional reflexivity, which considers new risks connected to the transformation of time-space, and the reflexive self whose existence is based on radical doubt, are central to the reflexivity of modernity, being both linked to its “de-traditionalising” nature. Reflexive modernity entails a “post-traditional order”: “The transformation of time and space /.../ propel social life away from the hold of pre-established precepts and practices” (1991: 9).

In summary, Giddens’s conception of reflexivity is largely restricted to the cognitive, informational, ethical and political dimensions. Art and the festive have no relevance for Giddens in relationship to reflexivity. Even more: there is no such thing as artistic reflexivity: “Is there such a thing as aesthetic reflexivity? I don’t think so, or at least I wouldn’t put it this way. I am not at all sure that, as Lash puts it, there is ‘an entire other economy of signs in space’ that functions separately from cognitive symbols”(1994b: 197). His dismissal of artistic reflexivity is associated with the post-structuralist use of that “paradoxical idea”. The question however is not only about the post-structuralist questioning of the narratives of reason but also about the character of art in general, which is also present in festivities¹⁴. No concern with festive traditions may be found in Giddens’s work, so he loses the possibility of looking at art and the festive in relationship to reflexivity and tradition. Artistic reflexivity is not a monopoly of post-structuralism. Anyone interested in festive

traditions and rituals has to confront the relevance of art and play to their mechanisms of social reproduction.

It is difficult to make a connection between this perspective on reflexivity and the public sphere, for Giddens, unlike Habermas, has never provided a proper study of the 'public thing'. But it is possible to discern this link through some of his commentaries on the persistence of traditions in relationship to discursive justification and legitimacy.

Let us first outline a general idea. For Giddens there are two types of traditions. First, there are 'traditional traditions' which present an understanding of truth that is "formulaic" and defended by "guardians". They can persist in modernity as fundamentals, which are said to reject reflexive understanding of tradition. Second, there are those traditions that pass the test of a dialogical model of truth, which is based "on the dialogical engagement of ideas in a public space" (1994a: 6). Giddens argues that in a "post-traditional social order" tradition does not disappear but changes its status (1994a: 5). In a detraditionalised society", each tradition is compelled to pass the canons of modern reflexivity in a public sphere to persist and be legitimate. This is what differentiates the pre-modern from the modern. In a post-traditional society traditions have to be explained and justified discursively: 'traditions only persist in so far as they are made available to discursive justification and are prepared to enter into open dialogue not only with other traditions but with alternative modes of doing things' (1994b: 105).

Giddens assumes, then, that traditions have to adapt to the canons of rational justification as a condition of their persistence and legitimisation. In a "post-traditional society" tradition ceases to operate in its "traditional way", while the social

reflexivity of individuals in a “detraditionalising society” makes it possible for them to decide what will count as tradition. The predominance of cognitive decisionism is also evident when he shows the similarity between tradition and nature: “Tradition, like nature, used to be, as it were, an external framework for human activity which ‘took’ many decisions for us. But now we have to decide about tradition: what to try to sustain and what to discard. And tradition itself, while often important and valuable, can be of very little help in this” (1994a: 49).

This is, however, a statement that should be tested empirically. What usually happens in festive traditions is exactly the opposite: their sociability persists in so far as they retain their ambiguity and keep their cognitive content in check. This problem arises because Giddens contrasts discursive justification to ‘formulaic truth’, with no place for other possibilities such as the ambiguity of humour, poetical language and art, which can have a critical spirit and peculiar reflexive thematisations. Accordingly, contrary to the fact that Fallas are critical contemporary monuments that keep their original ambiguity by continuing to use myths and jokes, he thinks that ‘monuments turn into relics once formulaic truths are disputed or discarded, and the traditional relapses into the merely customary or habitual’ (1994b: 104). But Giddens does not have enough empirical evidence to prove this idea.

Thus Giddens, like Habermas, is proposing to submit traditions to rational discourse. This attitude may be necessary to scrutinise the violent practices of some traditions, but as a general way of dealing with the mechanisms of persistence of tradition, and with festive traditions in particular, it runs the risk of misunderstanding the nature of traditions and celebrations. A much more reliable way of understanding them is by taking a participative involvement in them: the understanding of festivity is

not something that can be acquired independently of the festive itself. A cognitivist and decisionist reflexivity is not the best perspective on the complexities of festive sociability which has a playful-artistic character.

Finally, Giddens's account of the transformation of tradition is distorted by his reductionist perspective on reflexivity and the public sphere, which does not include art and festivity. As a consequence, there is no place for the possibility of an ambiguous connection between festive traditions and expert systems. Yet there may be at the same time autonomous and mixed practices. Contrary to Giddens's opinion, local festive traditions may become more elaborate and complex in an advanced or 'globalised' modernity, as is the case with the Fallas.

Giddens overemphasises the transformation of tradition into new compulsive routines of the 'expert systems' and the institutional settings of modernity, but he does not look at how tradition may evolve in the direction of the artistic and poetic¹⁵. Also, with very little evidence to support his claims, Giddens understands globalisation as destructive of local traditions and as a cause of their 'evacuation'. The Fallas, by contrast, have become more elaborate, and have expanded into other localities, notably increasing in number precisely at a time of Globalisation. Rather than finding neurotic compulsion, cognitive recreation, evacuation and relics in the Fallas, we perceive a push towards a form of expansion, and to some extent 'Globalisation', of a festive tradition which forges a link between modern and contemporary experience. Consequently, Giddens cannot account for the particularity of festivity, which is a constant characteristic of human beings, and is beyond the conceptual oppositions entailed by labels such as tradition, modernity, high modernity, advanced society and

post-traditional order. Festivity is also, of course, beyond left and right, and beyond the 'politics of existence' as well.

HABERMAS: FROM REASON TO THE SACRED, AND BACK TO REASON.

The sacred is at the centre of Jürgen Habermas's project (1979, 1983, 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1992a, 1992b). He offers two empirical hypotheses, both of which concern the nature and transformation of rituals and tradition. They are at the axis of his "change of paradigm towards communication" (1987a). The first is a hypothesis about the "three roots of communicative action"; the second is a hypothesis about the "linguistisation of the sacred". My purpose is to challenge both of these hypotheses, which lie at the centre of the proposed change of paradigm. I suggest that Habermas's argument constitutes a circular teleology, which is distinctive of idealism.

First, I shall criticise Habermas's model of the public sphere, which, according to him, is at the core of the manifestation of modern reason. Second, I shall focus on Habermas's way of interpreting reason as the reflexivity of language, and also on his theory of truth. I shall clarify the role of the sacred in relationship to truth, explaining the distinction Habermas makes between the 'transcendent' and the 'factual' as a 'tension'. Finally, I shall argue that the transformation of tradition is one sided in Habermas. It is understood as a rationalisation which takes place through 'linguistisation'.

1. The exclusion of the festive from the public sphere.

Habermas is concerned with the liberal public sphere only. No place is left for the satirical and popular public sphere: "Our investigation is limited to the structure and

function of the *liberal* model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation. Thus it refers to those features of a historical constellation that attained dominance and leaves aside the *plebeian* public sphere as a variant that in a sense was suppressed in the historical process”(1992a: xviii).

Habermas understands *plebeian* here, in a restricted manner, as a matter of movements of “uneducated people” that functioned for a moment during Robespierre’s leadership, surviving in a submerged way in other movements such as the Chartist and anarchist movements. On the other hand, he sees them as inevitably oriented towards the enlightened and liberal public sphere: “Yet even this plebeian public sphere ... remains oriented toward the intentions of the bourgeois public sphere. In the perspective of intellectual history it was, like the latter, a child of the eighteenth century”. Thus he fails to explore other worker movements that may have incorporated aspects of the old satiric and Carnival-oriented public sphere¹⁶.

Habermas certainly discusses festivity in the narrow context of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie who were able to read and write; but he neglects the popular side of festive traditions. However, even in the context of the well read, his account of festivity is frequently one-sided. Let me cite two examples. First, excluding Goethe, there is no consideration of the literary or artistic tradition of satire and carnival. Second, when he narrates the process of retreat of the festive from the streets, his appreciation of certain periods rests entirely on local and partial considerations. This is the case with his generalisation about baroque festivals which “retreated from the public places into the enclosures of the park, from the streets into the rooms of the palace”(1992a: 8)¹⁷.

In general, Habermas's account is restricted to the type of individual who would be able to equate reason with public judgement, and would be able to read. The protagonists of that "emerging public sphere of civil society" are the bourgeois: "This stratum of "bourgeois" was the real carrier of the public, which from the outset was a reading public"(1992a: 23). Habermas's paradigmatic figure is Kant, whose discourse helps him to introduce his equation of reason, democracy and communication, as core of that modern public sphere (1992a: 104). It has its roots in the sphere of influence of the broad European movement of the *Republic of Letters* which, as Habermas rightly indicates, considers the "World" as the "world of letters", assimilating it to the public sphere. This emergence of the public sphere also depends on a prior separation of the public and the private, as well as the development of a new subjectivity, a type of individuals who "by communicating with each other in the public sphere of the world of letters, confirmed each other's subjectivity as it emerged from their spheres of intimacy"(1992a: 54).

These individuals develop universal ideas of equality and liberty for "common human beings". They like to reason and debate critically under the aegis of rationality and public life. A new 'power' which as we shall see is also at the centre of Habermas's theory of truth is the power of the best argument. It grows with consciousness of itself. Habermas's emphasis is on the moral, political and 'right', which is going to be the guide for his understanding of reason and, as I shall show later, of communication and speech. Particular importance also attaches to Habermas's assignment of a leading role to morality in the orientation of individuals. Morality becomes fundamental to his thinking about the transformation of rituals, and takes priority over the artistic, the playful or the festive. Moreover, his idea of a

‘claim’, as the core of the critical exercise, in a debate that has public conditions is already pre-figured here.

In addition, Habermas is concerned about the recent condition of the public sphere. It suffered a crisis as a result of several social impacts, especially the extension of mass culture and consumer society. Consequently, it must be reconstructed: “Today occasions for identification have to be created - the public sphere has to be ‘made’, it is not ‘there’ anymore”(1992a: 201). The contemporary public sphere has two sides which have to be reconstructed because they have lost the critical capacities that the liberal model once had. These two levels are understood from the perspective of “being politically relevant spaces for communication”. They are the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’; and they are linked by a third factor, the mass media.

(a) The informal contains personal, non-public opinions. But Habermas is highly sceptical about the power of this informal side to challenge the effects of the mass media and its consumer orientation. Opinions are shaped in the network of groups that cannot finally get “ideas sustained by conviction”. These groups are the family, the peer group and other work and neighbourhood relations. Matters allegedly become topical and are regulated by fashion, under the influence of the mass media and opinion leaders. Habermas makes a revealing comment which displays his assumptions about the non-reflexive nature of tradition: he compares this ready-made quality of informal opinion with “ancient opinion”, which was secured by tradition in pre-bourgeois society (1992a: 246).

(b) The formal and institutionalised side of the public sphere is also far removed from the liberal model of a “public process of rational-critical debate”. The

mass media articulate the two domains of the public sphere together but it is then “caught in a vortex of publicity that is staged for show or manipulation”(1992a: 247). This manipulative publicity places the informal side in a feedback loop, rendering its autonomy impossible. Finally, Habermas briefly suggests, as a solution consistent with his liberal model, that individuals should participate privately in the creation of critical public opinion which would formally conduct communication in and between organisations. These “intraorganisational public spheres”, would have to incorporate the domain of the informal into the participative process (1992a: 248-250).

Again, this picture seems to me restrictive. Traditions should not be equated with lack of reflection. The informal side of the public sphere may be enriched by festive sociability and satire. ‘Small talk’, for instance, may simply serve to sustain sociable relationships. Habermas’s picture does not allow us to differentiate the manipulative ready-made content from the relevant element of sociability: that is, to preserve the relationship, independently of the substance of its content. In general, the critical side of festivals such as the Fallas is more powerful than Habermas concedes. The critical outlook of the Fallas enjoys a degree of relative autonomy, which is also demonstrated in their relationship with the mass media. Fallas, for instance, make satire at the expense of television. Habermas’s liberal model, focused on the content of opinions, cannot take account of the satiric, artistic and festive aspects of the popular public sphere. Rather, Habermas’s model claims to be *the* criterion for legitimating everything in the public sphere. This means that traditions have to submit to his understanding of the liberal public sphere if they are to enjoy ‘legitimacy’. In other words: they have to pass through a rational debate in the liberal public sphere that grants them ‘permission’ to be transmitted. Fallas, however, are able to

incorporate rational debate into their festive tradition. But it is not a 'liberal imperative' of legitimation that compels them to do so.

2. Reflexivity without festive sociability

The core of Habermas's linguistic turn relies upon an idea of Humboldt: the strength of the synthesis of language which generates unity among the differences of the participants in conversation. This fusion of perspectives in language means, according to Habermas, that it is possible to abandon the idea that individual consciousness must come first¹⁸. Humboldt's ideas are enriched by the contributions of Mead, Chomsky, and Wittgenstein as well as by Frege's semantics and Austin's and Searle's philosophy of ordinary language. In the light of this theoretical work, which I cannot detail here, Humboldt may be reinterpreted as follows: the interaction of 'ego' and 'alter' constitutes a speech act, structured as the minimal unit of conversation.

I must focus on the two fundamental elements which are needed to improve this way of characterising the reflexivity of language. First, semantics provide us with a way of associating meaning with validity, for the idea is to build validity into the process of understanding a speech act. The strategy is very simple: Habermas replaces '1' and '0', which worked in functions (Frege), for the active 'yes' and 'no' of a speaker, who displays his comprehension of a speech act when he responds to its corresponding validity claim with an acceptance or a negation (Habermas, 1992a:61). In other words validity and meaning are mutually implied in the sentence or speech act, and this can be affirmed or denied in the context of a conversation. Second, speech acts have 'three functions' and a 'double structure'. Every speech act manifests three linguistic functions: objective, normative and expressive. Also, speech acts have

a 'double structure', they 'say' something about the world (the three previous functions correspond to parts of the world) but at the same time they 'do' something. Habermas also refers to this 'double structure' as the 'self-referential' quality of speech acts. The art of saying something about the world is related to the propositional content, the first component. The quality of doing something relates to the illocutionary, the second component. A relevant characteristic of this double structure of speech is that "both components, the propositional and the illocutionary, can vary independently of one another" (Habermas, 1979:41). Habermas situates the reflexivity of reason, inscribed in natural language, precisely in these properties of language, and identifies the task for his "Universal Pragmatics" as the "reconstruction of this double structure of speech" (Habermas, 1979:44; 1992a:64).

This reflexivity has its core manifestation in a theory of truth which is argumentative. Validity becomes a set of active "validity claims" in a conversation. Participants make validity claims that can be denied or criticised by bringing new reasons into the discursive context. Hence, this theory links meaning and validity, comprehension and the dynamics of the exercise of these validity claims in discursive argumentation. It is also the core of critique in Habermas's modern Public Sphere, which incorporates those 'claims' that pushed towards the emergence of the best argument. Discursive argumentation makes possible the appearance of criteria for the proper criticism and legitimation of anything, including tradition: it implies the power of the best argument. The sources of this power, and the quality of its particular 'force', will be discussed below.

Habermas's theory of truth may be seen in phenomenological terms as a way of confronting a problem in the life world, as a critical 'thematization', which can be

validated in a conversation by the use of argument. Hence, when 'something' in the life world is problematic (or is worthy of being examined), we can go on to develop the discursive argument by means of validity claims which are open to criticism and which are brought about by the participants in interaction who share the same perspective. These validity claims correspond to the three components of the life world¹⁹. Their articulation may be summarised as: 1) instrumental action purports to affirm or negate something existent in the objective world, 2) expressive action purports to be true in the subjective world and 3) communicative action purports to conform with the normative structures of the life world (Habermas, 1979:28).

In these particular conditions of argumentation, the best argument imposes itself on others, so long as the orientation is towards agreement. This is possible because, according to Habermas, argumentation is produced in conditions of a special tension between two poles which depends on that "double structure" of language. These two levels constitute a fundamental distinction, and this accounts for the specificity of his overall project. First, there is an idealised consensus, represented by the Ideal Community of Communication, which exercises a peculiar "force" on the validity claims which are put forward in discursive conversation. This force will be finally characterised by Habermas, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, in terms of the force of the sacred, understood as the historical dynamics of a group social ideal. Second, the autonomy of the propositional content of speech and the capacity of the speakers to say "yes" or "no" guarantee a connection with the factual and empirical.

The differentiation between, on the one hand, the 'harmony of minds', directly depending on the sacred, and, on the other hand, the 'harmony of things', factual and

context-dependent is usually emphasised by Habermas when he has to stress that he has not committed, as I argue here, a circular teleology, tautology or *petitio principii*, which are characteristic of idealism. There is a tension between the ideal and the factual (reminiscent of Durkheim's 'transcendent' and 'immanent' movements of the sacred), which makes it unnecessary for Habermas 'to have to choose between Kant and Hegel'²⁰.

It is clear now that reflexivity and truth are not neutral in relationship to 'faiths'. The force of the 'claims' and the 'best argument', the pressure towards agreement, have their origins in a way of understanding the sacred, which in turn has its core in the Ideal Community of Communication, the nucleus of a social ideal. We found the same ideal at the centre of Habermas's model of the public sphere.

Now, the question is whether this reflexivity and theory of truth also segregate aspects of festive sociability. First, the emphasis on argumentation polarises people's attitude with a big gap in the middle: either they focus on a rational thematisation to solve a problem (critical argumentation) or they routinely take for granted the stocks of rules, knowledge, etc., which are deposited in the life world. There is no place for a wider 'sociable thematisation' which is able to retain its substance but in a subordinate form. Examples of it are the witty criticisms of the satiric monument or the enjoyable critical parades which also incorporate the body in joyful movement and present a collective display of emotions. The unconscious and laughter, which play a role in jokes or in play cannot be confined to a search for veracity as expressive features of sociability.

Second, Habermas's reduction to 'yes' and 'no' does not fit with what really matters in those cases for the participants in festivities. As content is less relevant,

actors express themselves in other ways such as crying, shouting, etc. They can also respond by telling a joke or by ironically praising the high culture of someone who becomes boring and unsociable when he is too concerned with 'the facts'. This last example, also demonstrates the wider peculiarities of the reflexivity of sociability which constitutes my third observation. The expressive, festive and artistic fundamentally escape from a discourse of validity claims. As Simmel and Heidegger showed, they have a reflexivity which relies on movement between proximity to, and distance from, life.

3. The rationalisation of tradition: the "Linguistisation of the Sacred"

Habermas's restricted notions of reflexivity and the public sphere entail a correspondingly reductionist account of the evolution of rituals and the sacred. They evolve according to the characteristics of his reflexivity, theory of truth and public sphere. The sacred supposedly undergoes a disenchantment, as was the case with Weber, but its rationalisation is said to be 'communicative'. The sacred evolves towards 'linguistisation', dissolving into the reflexivity of language. I am going to show how this linguistisation, without the support of empirical research by Habermas, is actually a tautology.

The hypothesis of linguistisation constitutes a crucial point in the conjunction that Habermas effects between Durkheim and Mead. It concerns the moment when the "normative" and the practical-moral subject make their appearance in philogenesis. Also, Habermas considers these moral aspects of evolution as fundamental, regarding others, such as the artistic-expressive as secondary and dependent. The hypothesis holds that "the disenchantment and disempowering of the domain of the sacred takes

place by way of a linguistization of the ritually secured, basic normative agreement; going along with this is a release of the rationality potential in communicative action” (Habermas, 1987: 77). Thus consensus achieved through co-operation in Habermas’s theory of truth takes the place previously occupied by consensus arising from sacred ritual..

In short the priority accorded by Habermas to morality emerges from the evolution of the sacred. Habermas is convinced that the normative sphere is the first place where the legacy of transcendence is taken up “Inasmuch as the sacred domain was constitutive for society, neither science nor art can inherit the mantle of religion; only a morality, set communicatively aflow and developed into a discourse ethics, can replace the authority of the sacred in this respect” (Habermas, 1987: 92).

Communicative rationality is therefore the new mask, and impoverished celebration, of an old form of representation which has outgrown tragedy, satire and the Popular Festival. It envisages a God whose sword points towards an idea of individuation, justice and liberty²¹:

“he can be identified generically as an autonomously acting subject and numerically by such data as throw light on the continuity of a life history he has responsibly taken upon himself. *At any rate, this is the direction pointed in by the Western (i.e., articulated in the Judeo-Christian tradition) concept of the immortal soul of creatures who, in the all-seeing eye of an omnipresent and eternal creator, recognise themselves as fully individuated beings*’ (Habermas, 1987: 106, emphasis mine)

The special features of Habermas’s modern individual, particularly its content-focused and ‘normative-moral’ orientation (a sort of ‘moral intellectualism’), are also

seen as essential for the emergence of the communicative competence of the species, a moment restrictively characterised by normativisation and the separation of the propositional content in speech. These are the reflexive characteristics of the individual who was found in the Public Sphere.

By contrast the existence of elaborated forms of popular religiosity in modernity, as is the case with the Fallas, shows that there are other forms of the sacred which are malleable enough to co-exist, and overlap, with the derivatives of Christian monotheism and rationalistic humanism. As Durkheim points out, any theory which fails to take this folkloric religiosity into consideration does not do justice to the totality of the sacred in all its forms. Habermas restricts the transformation of the sacred to the emergence of only one social ideal, when there are others which can claim the same right²². However, Habermas pretends to have universal criteria for discussing the persistence and legitimacy of tradition.

Festive actors are skilful in creating the overlapping and synthetic practices that are needed to 'bring off' Festivity. This shows that the question of any existing vacuum that would separate, or oppose, tradition and contemporary life is not an issue for the festive actors themselves, as they preserve the ancient way of participating in a celebration.

CONCLUSIONS

As the following chapters will try to make clear, the fact that the Fallas of Valencia have continued to flourish in conditions of modernity right up to the end of the 20th century indicates that the theoretical perspectives of Giddens and Habermas are too narrow to account for this constant elaboration of tradition. It makes very little sense

to explain this complex configuration of tradition-in-modernity in terms either of purely cognitive reflexivity or of rationalised notions of the sacred in dialogical language. Instead, as I shall argue below, these restrictive accounts of modernity and its transformations need to be supplemented by insights into the distinctive interplay between traditional and modern forms of festive sociability displayed by the Fallas of Valencia.

ENDNOTES

¹ Shils says that the 'ad hoc' explanations and the residual status usually given to the category of tradition are due to the lack of consideration of time in sociology (1971: 124). He insists on the temporal sequential form of its being handed down and on its *filiation*, as transmitting beliefs from one generation to another. Thus the main process of a tradition is 'the intertemporal *filiation* of beliefs' (1971: 127).

² The transmission of tradition, for Gadamer 1991, is not simply a matter of conservation because it also involves active engagement and learning, a 'formation' which is however different from the evolutionist conception of *Bildung*. Thus, even the repetition that tradition operates is not a faithful copy of the old, but a process of learning how to think and express things again, in the present. The qualities of tradition characterise the common existential condition of humankind as a 'capacity to unify the present and the past, in the simultaneity of times, styles, races and classes' (Gadamer 1991: 112, 116). This is the stuff of memory, the secret of tradition's capacity to lend permanence to the ephemeral.

³ This incorporation of the festive into the very way of accessing the world is also central to this study at the level of methodology, techniques and access to the festive field.

⁴ I use re-cognition in the sense of Gadamer (1991: 94)

⁵ For Heidegger, art, play and poetics, in combination with ‘affective’ moods, are prior to any ‘problem solving’.

⁶ Simmel (1971: 324 ff.) analyses in ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, this modern, now urbanite, focus on content and on what counts as a fact in terms of the kind of rationalism and intellectualism that sequester emotions and obviously sociability. This attitude is also connected with the sense of calculation, and of quantitative equivalence which is characteristic of money. Fallas constitute, however, a sociable festive tradition in a contemporary urban context. They challenge some of these characteristics of the Metropolis by practising their festive sociability, which includes aspects of ‘urban life’ (subordinated to sociability), as a useful way of expanding their tradition. In relationship with Simmel’s use of Nietzsche in this context, the Fallas are perhaps an example of a practice that approximates to Nietzsche’s recommendation about learning about Apollo to keep Dionysius alive.

⁷ Simmel understands this as a “gift” of the individual to the whole. It amounts to a “social ideal” which Simmel calls “the freedom of bondage” (1971: 136-138).

⁸ Bakhtin’s theory of popular festivals draws inspiration from Rabelais’s literary formulations. For Bakhtin (1987: 250) ‘Festivity is the first and indestructible category of human civilization’. For him popular Festivities present a recurrent pattern of forms which are governed by the “universality of laughter”. After characterising it, like hermeneutics and Durkheim, as the opposite of the utilitarian

and the practical, he identifies the same axial constitutive activities of festive sociability that I discuss below with the exception of work. Other aspects of this theory of Festivity will be also integrated into the next section.

⁹ This broad combination of hermeneutics and the Durkheimian school seems to me viable, particularly when the focus is on the general understanding of ‘the social’ advanced by authors such as Marcel Mauss. Social phenomena, particularly when they are of a religious and festive nature, constitute ‘total institutions’ in the sense of retaining their ties with many elements, including nature. The ontology of the Four-fold is therefore not too far from the holistic nature of total institutions.

¹⁰ Dreams, for example, are fundamental to the hermeneutical understanding of Festivity (Heidegger, 1982: 100 ff.) and to psychoanalysis (Freud, 1988: 1,348). Durkheim is also aware of the existence of fantasy, imagination and many festive activities that have neither rationality nor clear meaning. Freud linked fantasy and day-dreaming with mythical imagination and poetic creation. As a substitute for children’s play they are a ‘preliminary pleasure’ which dissolves some cares of the spirit. As is the case with night dreams, they provide a surrogate satisfaction of latent desires.

¹¹ See also Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*.

¹² The association between popular festivals and madness may also be clearly found in the so-called ‘Festival of fools’.

¹³ “O friends, no more these sounds!/ Let us sing more cheerful songs,/ more full of joy!” (Schiller’s and Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*, 1st strophe)

¹⁴ Lash (1999:111) rightly indicates that artistic reflexivity is a part of popular culture and the biographical existence.

¹⁵ Freud also explains how contemporary art and poetics have a relationship with myths and traditions. But Giddens is not concerned with contemporary people who 'substitute' tradition and link with it, in a festive and artistic manner.

¹⁶ Reig 1982, 1986, 1988, for example, has intensively studied the connections between the Valencian movement called Blasquismo and the local popular culture.

¹⁷ See Pedraza 1981 on the street feasts and carnival processions of the Valencian Ephemeral Baroque. Habermas forgets the flourishing procession of Corpus Christi with its carnivalesque side. He also neglects festive life which, as Bakhtin in general and Pedraza in particular for Valencia demonstrate, is full of Carnival culture.

Students persist with a satiric feast to welcome 'freshmen', significantly known in Spain as a variant of the popular *diablada*.

¹⁸ Language is prior to isolated consciousness: "These speaker and hearer perspectives no longer converge at the focal point of subjectivity centred in itself; they instead intersect at the focal point of language - and as this focal point Humboldt designates the 'reciprocal conversation in which ideas and feelings are sincerely exchanged.'" (Habermas, 1992b:163).

¹⁹ These three ambits of the world, and its corresponding linguistic functions, are taken from Popper and Bhuler respectively.

²⁰ 'The transcendental gap between the intelligible and the empirical worlds no longer has to be overcome through the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of history. It has instead been reduced to a tension transferred into the life world of the communicative actors themselves, a tension between the unconditional character of context-bursting, transcendent validity claims on the one hand and, on the other hand,

the factual character of the context-dependent 'yes' and 'no' positions that create social facts *in situ*." (Habermas, 1992b: 142).

²¹ With this argument Habermas diminishes the place of Schiller and Beethoven's God of joy, a part of his own heritage which may dialogue with the gods, as joy is initially a "bright spark from the gods".

²² A more detailed explanation of Habermas's segregation of festivity, myths and satiric rituals in relationship with the sacred, including the consideration of tradition and modernity, is in Costa, X.1995.

CHAPTER IV

FESTIVE SOCIABILITY AS AXIS OF THE FALLA'S TRANSMISSION : **AGENTS AND CENTRAL ACTIVITIES'**

1. FESTIVE SOCIABILITY

The Falla is a festive community, a group of people who practise sociability in the context of a festive tradition. The social identity of Fallers depends on their level of integration in, and commitment towards, this festive community. As a participant said: “to be Fallers means to be integrated in a community”. Other key expressions often used by the participants to refer to it are: “a gathering of people”, “meeting centre”, “ a group of people who celebrate our Festivity”, and “a group of people who want to enjoy themselves by being together and feeling a tradition”.

The Falla, as a permanent centre of festive sociability, constitutes the fundamental basis for this sense of community. Festive sociability is more relevant than the monument which is the main theme of the tradition, but it only makes its presence felt most strongly in the final festive period. What matters is the sociable gathering, if possible with a meal. As a Faller said: “we have to make the monument but when I say I am going to the Falla I mean that I have a gathering, the Falla is a place for meeting, then I go to have my dinner there”. This character of festive sociability, as I shall show throughout this chapter, manifests more strongly and visibly in frequent displays of soft-talking, playing, joking and teasing the others. It is also present in the frequent search for ‘excuses’ to eat together or to share a collective

task. Play, humour, comensalism and sociable work are at the core of festive sociability.

The sociability of the Falla is generally seen as very helpful in improving social links between people and counteracting isolation. Sociability, as was indicated by Simmel, is an exhilarating and liberating condition, an opinion that would be shared by the participants. Good company, play and laughter are old remedies. As a member put it: “you get out, meet others, tease them and laugh”. The parallelism between sociability, play and art may also be made clear by some members.

This general non-instrumental aspect of sociability, which is also characteristic of festivity, its being just for itself, or, as Simmel said, “for its own sake”, displays several specific characteristics in the case of the Falla. Its festive sociability, anchored in a sense of street life, constitutes a good *pharmacos* against the effects of segmentation and isolation caused by modern life. The desire for people to meet and get to know each other is always emphasised by festive actors. From this perspective, Fallas convey the heritage of the traditional, Mediterranean sense of festive sociability in the streets - but updated in dialogue with modern conditions. When asked about the spirit of the Falla, a senior Faller said, remembering the rich street sociable life of previous times:

‘It is a way to bring people together, because this is very much lacking. I remember when in Burjassot the people used to have dinner outdoors, and one made snails and the other made something and so on. This doesn’t happen any more. Now you meet a neighbour on the stairs and just say “good morning” or “good afternoon”, and that’s too much. There is a lack of relations’

Simmel explained that sociability resists the excesses of subjectivism and the dispersal of individual experiences which are perceived as going against the totality of the group. Festive sociability radicalises and generalises that particular feature. The Falla's sociability has a globalising and holist quality which resists any functional segmentation of life. That lively and ongoing wholeness, which is the sociable construction of the festive, is somehow 'older' and 'stronger', linking and amalgamating situations or settings which retain elements of emotion or humour. This quality is perhaps one of the secrets of the 'therapeutic' effects of sociability. As a consequence, activities overlap and tend to form a network of interconnections. Activities are plural but it is difficult to separate the course of one activity, or its contents, from another. This globalising and unifying nature of sociability also makes it easier, as I shall explain with more detail in the next chapter, to identify individualism, selfishness and instrumental behaviour.

This holist and egalitarian nature of festive sociability also has the power to bring together people from different backgrounds, so that the community gathering of the Falla is, as a member said, a "reunited small world /.../that in some way reflects the totality of the world. For example, people who spend all the year reading books mix with others who don't do that". This is said to be a general characteristic of the community: "all the Fallas have this reunion /gathering of people."

The origin of this power to link such different people together in a 'unity' is usually associated with a particular ambience, *el ambiente*, that has a sense of harmony and good interpersonal relations, where there is a communality of humour, laughter, jokes, play, work and daily conviviality.² The effervescent 'meeting' is the place where the *fiesta* grows for itself in this good atmosphere. The spontaneous

origin of festive sociability is described as a sort of crazy, spontaneous, joyful and disordered meeting, with neither specific purpose nor objective content. However, the effervescent festive meeting extends into daily social life which in the Falla is alive all year round.

2. AGENTS FOR TRANSMITTING THE TRADITION

(i) Friendly families and groups of friends: vertical and horizontal transmission

A complex network of friendly families, groups of friends and neighbours makes up the basic cells of the Falla. They are the agents of the transmission of the tradition by means of its festive sociability. The focus on festive sociability helps to show that the transmission involves what I shall call the ‘contagiousness of festive things’ which occurs when someone is living in the festive world, in its ‘atmosphere’. This does not diminish the role of the family, or the elderly, but reveals how traditions may also be transmitted from friendships towards the family when these relationships are developed in the context of festive sociability’s ‘atmosphere’ and social circles. Consequently, it helps to see how traditions may also be ‘handed up’ from children towards adults and ‘horizontally handed’ through the close relationships of families and groups of friends. It is equally important to understand how the Festivity has been so successful in integrating newcomers who had no previous relationship with the tradition. It is also relevant to see how locals who did not have the family tradition, including previous ‘anti-Fallers’, are now part of the festivity.

The participants refer neither to ‘beliefs’, as Shils suggested (1971:125), nor to ideas in order to explain how the tradition is transmitted. “Contagious” is the operative word here. The festivity is contagious at two levels. First, it is associated

with the vocabulary of bodily infection, being “in the blood”, and the process of catching a contagious sickness. This vocabulary is usually applied to confirm the festive identity of a member, specially babies and children who, after living the festivity with their families, start to wear costumes or set off fireworks.

Second and fundamentally, the contagiousness is in the Festivity itself, particularly in its infectious, ‘sticky’³ ‘festive atmosphere’: “You catch it, it is in the air, in the atmosphere”, said a Fallera Major. A Fallera of La Mancha origins indicated while she was showing me photos of joyful and harmonious gatherings: “You see, this is contagious”. When a Faller, also a fireworks handler, had to explain the origins of that contagiousness for newcomers and others he referred to a global atmosphere of the festive world, generated by the Festivity itself, incorporating beautiful things such as flowers, fireworks, costumes and the open nature of the Valencian people. Family and friendship are the main channels of ‘infection’ with the atmosphere of festive sociability. I shall look at them now from this perspective of their role as agents in the transmission of tradition.

The key processes of initiation and leaving will be separately discussed in relationship to particular groupings, but here I shall anticipate the basic trends of initiation in connection with the festive transmission. The Falla’s sociability predominantly transmits the tradition through the generations of the family. The basic channel of access to, and initiation into, the Festivity is by having other family links in the neighbourhood or locality. Handing down the tradition to children is very important. As I shall show in the section on age groups, children are normally registered by their parent at an early age, and the pattern of festive socialisation is very strong. However, the transmission adults-adults is very relevant too. It

constitutes a way to pass the tradition horizontally. It has two main forms, associated with the family, and a third one which relies on inter-family friendship and sense of neighbourhood.

First, a non-Faller marries a Faller and becomes a member. This case is very important for the integration of the newcomers who marry a local and for locals without a family connection. The hardest case is for someone without a previous link with Valencian culture. Newcomers find ways of making a link and sense of belonging in the Valencian neighbourhood and reconstruct identity through this family sharing of the collective experience of the Festivity. A Fallera who said that she initially joined the Falla to avoid divorce because of her husband's intense commitment, explained how she got deeply involved, becoming a member of the Committee and a Fallera Major's mother. She added: "It is contagious: now I live the Falla through my daughter; my mother lived it through me. However, we are very much *manchegos* [from La Mancha]".

Second, an entire family registers because a part of their 'small extended family' is associated with the Festivity. This case usually occurs when there is a change of neighbourhood. For this senior member and his family this happened just after getting married: "I married, bought a flat and came here. The following year, my daughter was a baby, and my brother-in-law was a Faller [one of the more committed in the association], and so we got into the Falla because of the family".

Third, a family gets involved because of a friendship with one or several festive families in the neighbourhood. This is not such a common case as the other two, but it accounts for the membership of key families in the Fallas I researched. This was the case of the present President's family in one of these Fallas, who

explained to me that the most important thing for him as a newcomer was “the will to integrate, because at the beginning I knew very few people in the Falla.”

The tradition also passes horizontally between children, and less frequently between teenagers who are the most numerous drop outs. The fundamental cell is the neighbourhood and school peer group which is partially composed of festive children or young people. It may incorporate some family links, such as cousins, but its essential nature is connected with friendship. This consolidated network of close families and friends committed to the Festivity is particularly relevant in situations of internal conflict, when the transmission of the tradition is in danger. A senior Faller explained the critical discrepancies that occurred during the Democratic Transition in Spain which, according to him, “caused a big division because of politics and, it was thanks to our strong links and old friendships rooted in the neighbourhood that the Falla didn’t break.”

(ii) Family

The family is the key institution in the Festivity. The Falla is perceived as a big family of families by many participants. There are two dominant patterns. One is the type of family which I shall call the ‘small extended family’. This type of family may include grand-parents, grand-children, some uncles and nephews, and brothers and sisters-in-law, but it is based on the modern nuclear family. The other, and more predominant type in number, is the typical modern nuclear family⁴. On the other hand, these nuclear and ‘small extended families’ also have family or friendship connections among themselves, some of which developed after joining the Falla. This creates a ‘clan image’ that combines family and friendship bonds. A Fallera of La Mancha

origin, who has many members of his family in the Falla, said: “We are authentic families, and there is the clan of the Bascuñanos and so on /.../, we see each other very much like in a family”. But a few others can see some problems for the integration of the wide network of associations: “The Fallas are not all together because there are differences; and these differences are traditional in some families.”⁵

This network of close-knit families ensures the continuity of festive life across the generations and gives rise to the self-image of a ‘big family’ which is applied to the community itself. This is very clear in the narration of the history of the Falla, particularly when some of the seniors who consider themselves as the ‘founding fathers’, explain the origins, frequently in biblical or mythical terms. An ex-President explained that the Festivity represents a whole way of life, and that what accounts for the consolidation of the tradition in the neighbourhood is a faithfulness that resides in the continuity of commitment coming from families despite the heavy costs involved.

(iii) Groups of friends

The second basic institution underlying the Falla is friendship: The Falla is a centre and source of friendships for all generations. My interviews with children showed that these friendships are also developed in the schools of the area. However, the impetus behind these relationships comes predominantly from the Association. Children not only strengthen their friendships in the Falla but also share things in the school that differentiate them from non-Fallers. The main way of making friends is said to be participation in the Falla because this allows them to incorporate school work and relationships into the festive context. They can also enjoy extra time with their friends during the Fallas. Youngsters also form *pandillas de amigos*, groups of friends or peer

groups, that may attract people from other areas through their school links. These *pandillas* are usually very much alive and responsible for the organisation of a lot of activities in the Association. Groups of children and youngsters may also be the core of a formalised structure of partially autonomous organised sub-groups of the association. Moreover, friendships may grow between people of different generations, according to the director of a brass band: “you see them when they are born, and later you become very friendly with them.”

The frontiers of the internal groups of friends are clearly visible in what I will later on call ‘comensalism strategies’. In comensalism the basic network of families overlaps with the other dimension of the groups of friends to create a particular unit that eats together; since they sit at the table together, each unit amounts to a basic sub-group in the association. Each unit resembles a clan that shares food and conversation. Friendships in this ‘clan’ become stronger and develop into quasi-family relationships. The degree to which friendships from other localities, and their differences, are included reveals the level of cosmopolitanism of the Festivity. This varies according to the nature of the people in each Falla. The underlying criterion that drives the selective integration is the potentially open nature of what I shall call a ‘community of equal brothers’, which is linked to the democratic principle of sociability. The tension is always between ‘being happy in the egg’ and opening up towards a new member of another sub-group or a new potential participant. In the words of a senior President:

‘Here people always say that during the days of the Festival there is one group or another that is criticised because they sit together. Well, I don’t criticise that: I sit as close to you as to another person. But if I can, I sit close to my

friends with whom I mix all the year. I don't do that to underestimate the others, but because I have more contact with some/.../. Here we are all equals; and we equally collaborate, so that if you have to sit close to that person for dinner, it is just another Faller, and no problem.'

Finally, like families, groups of friends in their overlapping activities in the Falla, provide a basic continuity for the history of the Falla and neighbourhood. The old *pandillas* grow and overlap, and people who were separated by age when they were children or teenagers come together within the Falla. They have children and see them playing together in the streets, like they did. The Falla embodies the history of the neighbourhood and breathes new life into it through its sociability. Separately from their internal links group members also have other friendships that are outside the association but they preserve their childhood friendships at the same time with the help of the encounters that the Falla creates.

Friendships in the Falla occur in the midst of a voluntary association. Participants have a modern concept of friendship, based on personal choice, but it is also based on common festive activities, so that friends come to know each other in many different contexts.

(iv) Age-groups and generations

Every participant takes for granted, and also make explicit that there are sub-groups in the Commissions. The basic ones are structured by age, but others form around friendships and personal affinities. A senior Faller put it very clearly: "Obviously there are three groups that are evident: children, youngsters and adults. But these groups acquire new sub-groups as a consequence of personal affinities". However, the

existence of these sub-groups does not necessarily mean that a bigger group with a collective task could not exist. The existence of sub-groups is then compensated for by the collective sharing of tasks and by the common enjoyment generated by their festive events. On the other hand, the potential for segregation is balanced by a strong sense of equality, and this will be subject to further commentaries in another section.

(v) Continuity between generations

Preparing for the Festivity brings generations together, although age normally separates people in a modern society. The Fallas nevertheless are a means for people of any age to participate in a collective task while at the same time allowing age groups to differentiate and develop their own activities. The 'big Fallera family' still retains the old sense of the extended family and its correspondingly wide links, but it also has to respect the modern individual and the nuclear family.

Participants, adults and young, agreed that the atmosphere of mutual trust is the fundamental basis that makes it possible for people of different ages to mix together. This trust was also seen as the key to understanding the way youngsters may assume organisational responsibilities in the Committee. Young festive actors explicitly said that the Falla's context permits them to have better relationships with adults than in other places where a variety of people of different ages coexist. The same is true of children. A child summarised it in this way: "you feel that they take care of you, help you and love you."

This cross-generational trust also has consequences for children at the level of children's 'responsibility'. It is exemplified by the band of the Falla Dr. Valls. The Director explained that the band is composed of children, teenagers, young people and

adults. He added that each sub-group had a special life of its own, and cited the example of the children and young people. The group of children were said to be friends who played together in the square and tended to go to the same school. The young people, belonging to the Young Assembly, the *Junta Jove*, were also said to organise activities for them. However, he emphasised the fact that the common musical work was shared by everybody, starting with children themselves who were more punctual for rehearsals than many adults. Their enthusiasm is such that during the busy days of the Festival, he continued, they “slept so little that they didn’t go to bed, but came to my house to wake me before going to work for the parade and also to wake me when they came back from their jobs to go out again with the Band”. He added that this collective spirit was visible in harmony, fun, complicity in joking and teasing during the rehearsals.

(vi) Adults

Adults have a more clearly defined pattern of identity. It clearly displays the festive social ideal, its shared background knowledge and emotions. Adults speak of responsibility, work, co-operation, help, sacrifice, effort, collaboration, tradition, etc; and they see their position in the context of a tradition spanning several generations, sometimes resorting to ‘a biblical type of narration’. They are also more able to accommodate festivities which go beyond their generation; and many described it as a “way of life”, a “manner to be” or “a social manner of living”. One said: “The Falla is a feeling /.../ I have been many years here in the Falla, and it is part of my life”. They can even incorporate their festive experiences of youth or childhood:

“The world of the Fallas is very much into me: I have really lived the Falla and near the Falla. I took communion with the old costume of *torrenti*. So even if you wouldn’t want it, or think in one way or another, you have it rooted inside. This means, as my grandma would say, that even if you change you always will have this way of being in your heart”

The actors’ consciousness about age as a conditioning or enabling circumstance flows from the greater knowledge they have about the characteristics of each activity and the attention and work they imply. They emphasise their ‘new capacities’ associated with seniority, which include knowing what works or does not work. Wisdom about how to pass responsibility on to a younger person is stressed: the young need to make their own decisions and arrangements.

It is common for adult Fallers to evoke nostalgia and memories. Adult women, particularly if they have children, compare their present experience with the past, realising that they can no longer do certain things that they did in the past. This consciousness is stronger if they also have an office: “I have turns in my job, and try to organise myself, but now I have children and it is different. It is not the total fun than it was before /.../ you have to select activities and go to bed at 2 am.”. Many adults talked about learning how to save their energy by being selective about activities and delegating jobs.

(vii) Children

Children have occupied an important place in the Festival from its very beginning⁶. The piece of music most characteristic of the Festivity, called ‘*El Fallero*’, the authentic Hymn of the Fallas, tells how they began with children collecting old things

and useless furniture from the neighbourhood with the help of a big '*estoreta*', a carpet, that they would carry all together or with the help of a donkey or a little cart. Today's children have not forgotten this. They still collect things to be burned on bonfires in the street, independently of the main festivity organised by the adults.

The old role of children as spontaneous, competitive constructors of piles of old furniture on bonfires has changed in the present circumstances of the Festivity. Children 'receive' a monument for them that they have not constructed: the '*Falla Infantil*', the Children's Falla, is made by an artist, an adult. Now they experience new forms of socialisation, control, education or training in the social life of the Festivity, new patterns of recognition for work and responsible participation. This follows patterns tremendously influenced by a modern conception of childhood and of the structure of the family, but still relates to a community-oriented attention to children. Children's peer groups build upon institutions, such as the school, to expand the festive community. They incorporate friends, new family members and contemporary cultural experiences in their festive social circles. Fallas have reached a peculiar sort of middle point between tradition and modernity that comes from the experience, implicit in the Festivity, of constantly splicing tradition with contemporary life.

The results of this 'dialogue' with tradition are 'naturalised' by members and by society. For example, children are still the basic protagonists of the *arreplegà*, the parade of collection, but now instead of getting old furniture, they collect money and give a little gift to people who contribute. They also participate in the parade of fireworks in the morning which is intended to awake the neighbours.

Children are socialised in the association through a variety of practices and events that they attend from a very young age, sometimes starting when they are babies. It is very common to see babies in their baby carriages accompanied by their parents in the Presentation or the Offering, in parades and cavalcades. Children are usually registered very early as Fallers, and this is interpreted by adults as an expression of faithfulness towards the Festivity. They say things such as “when he was two years old my child was already wearing the costume of the Offering”. Children are seen as the inheritors of the spirit of the Falla, and they appear in the accounts of senior members as a vital part of the continuum of life through the generations that develop into the collective: “We really take care of children because they are the Fallers of the future”. According to these accounts children learn a way of life that is similar to that of their parents and families, being the latest members of a chain beginning with the link of the family to the Falla.

In the case of newcomers to Valencia, but also in the case of many locals who have no previous family tradition, children are frequently responsible for bringing their families into the Fallas. They transmit the tradition ‘upwards’ as a consequence of the ‘sticky’, contagious influence of their Fallers friends in the neighbourhood and their school peer groups. Adult members, and particularly newcomers, as I have shown, may become Fallers because their children have close friends in the Falla. This is how some parents may be drawn into central roles in the Falla.

The socialisation and control of children are not only the responsibility of their parents, but are felt as a duty of all of the adults in the association. Adults take care of others’ children and regard it as their own responsibility. For example, a mother may prepare food for many children while another adult may lead an activity. This

collective sense of responsibility is very clear in the activities that provide security and control: “You take care of them as if they were also small sons and daughters of yours”. Again Fallas are re-elaborating the old customs of family life in the social life of the street and neighbourhood in a community spirit.

Children participate in a wide range of activities during the year. Their importance is reflected in the existence of an organisation, the Children’s Commission, which mirrors the structure of the Falla’s adult Commission. The Falla General Committee has a ‘Delegation of Children’, whose adult leaders are normally said to have a great amount of work. A senior member said with feeling: “The people in the Children’s Delegation are the ones who get burnt most.”

The activities that children regularly share during the year, which include playing in the band, play back (or karaoke), dancing, theatre, sports, etc., function as a cheap and controlled ‘educational parking’ for the children of the working class alongside school. This helps to reduce the risks of modern life for children and teenagers. Activities and events for children during the festive period may be divided into three types: the spontaneous, those organised by adults for children and the regular activities developed with adults. This third type includes the formal rituals of the festive period which are analysed elsewhere. Here I shall concentrate on the first two. Playing with fireworks, and the making of small, improvised bonfires in the streets, are the most common spontaneous activities of children. These activities are constant; they start and progress in rhythm with the Festivity to such an extent that children are called the ‘natural clock’ of the Festival. This activity, in addition to their presence in the parade collecting money, is a reminder of the old role of children as protagonists of the building of the Festivity. Fireworks are freely sold to children in

the kiosks. A peculiar sense of risk and security is present here, very different from that existing in other countries.

The second type of activities are specially organised for children by adults. Families appreciate it very much if a Falla arranges many activities for children, and this may even constitute a reason to be more involved, and perhaps finally join. The existence of these activities is a sign of good health for the association, as a father made clear when comparing the Fallas of the locality: “ This Falla has a better atmosphere, they make more activities for children”. Activities include *tombolas*, ‘chocolate parties’ with games, ‘play-back’ and karaoke, athletic and sports competitions, spectacles and attractions with such things as ‘bouncy castles’. After the competitions the giving of prizes may constitute a relatively big event, usually celebrated with a dinner. The Falla Ecuador even rent a special ‘hall of festivities’ in the centre of Valencia to give a dinner, celebrating the annual prize giving to children.

(viii) Young people

Fallas lose an enormous number of registered teenage members. About 10% of Ecuador’s members are teenagers (two thirds of them are girls), but the real percentage is difficult to fix, because the Falla is, as a member said, “a sort of elastic thing”, a flexible social framework which ‘receives’ some of them on particular occasions but not others. There is general agreement among members and ex-members about the fact that the potential weak point in the biographical career of a Faller/a is the period of youth: many participants leave at this age. Contact with a wider variety of groups of friends, in the school and outside the neighbourhood, and

the higher mobility of youth, open up wider alternatives to the Fallas which are local and tied in with the family and neighbourhood.

Groups of friends are basic to young people, but their role is ambiguous in relationship to the Festivity. They may either bring people to the Falla or make them leave. The first alternative is very clear in the example of an adult member who during his youth was living a long way from the Casal but had his group of friends in the Falla: "So I was in the Falla and years passed till I was eighteen, that is the age that you start to wake up, and then you had there a group of friends". The experience of leaving because of finding other 'life paths' and groups of friends is frequent. A ex-Fallera explained that she started to travel more and move out of the locality with new school friends who were not Fallers and to develop a diverse group of friends linked to her hobbies and personal interests.

Other reasons for young people to drift away from Fallas include: (a) having groups of friends who like other activities different from those offered in a particular Falla, such as football or singing in a chorus; (b) having a girlfriend or boyfriend who does not like the Festivity; (c) going to do military service, or (d) having incompatible work demands.

Adults have strategies for counteracting the effects of these factors on the social life of the Falla, although not all of them are planned or fully conscious strategies. Their success varies according to the each Falla. In one case they were highly succesful (Ecuador), but in another they frequently failed (Dr. Valls). Adults are often ambivalent about the development of these strategies. They try to keep youngsters in the Falla, but too much freedom or responsibility would give young people too much power, making extra demands that would have to be taken up in the

Falla. Thus, when confronted with some youth initiatives, adults may sometimes use administrative or economic reasons for turning them down. An example of this was the repeated request for a big screen and equipment for 'discotheque parties' for young people in Dr. Valls, but it was turned down each time. A senior member of the General Committee said: "Although you see that Susi [active and responsible girl who heads the Young Assembly] is in the GC and collaborates. However, if they say 'we want that and the other', money is what matters, because if there is no money it is clear that we cannot make it."

The Fallers emphasise that many young people come back later. A mother said: "During adolescence some drop out of the Falla. However, later on, when this critical period is over a big percentage of them always come back". The characteristics of those who stay are very clear. The general rule is to have the tradition in the family, but having friends in the Fallas' world as well, particularly a boy or girlfriend, would be a major help. Usually the young people who remain are quickly promoted in the career of Fallers, and maybe rapidly become part of the Directive. These young Fallers usually work very hard for the Falla, and when they marry and have children, the whole family will be a basic part of the community-association. Other youngsters rejoin when they are married and have children. This is the point at which the model of family assumed in the Falla begins to correspond with their need for activities for children which fit in with the adults' forms of sociability.

The pattern of generations in the Falla is one of continuity and overlapping. This vital continuum presents a vertical line from seniors to children and a horizontal one in which there is an overlapping of groups of friends of different ages. Children and young people constantly interact with adults and the elderly thanks to a collective

focal task. The traditional sense of the family is thus re-produced in interaction with a modern context. Consequently, family and friendship guarantee the reproduction of the tradition. However, the transmission is not only from adults to children, but horizontally and from children to adults as well. This is because 'beliefs' are not the fundamental thing transmitted in the Festivity. Festive sociability is contagious, and 'infects' people with its 'atmosphere'.

3. THE CENTRAL ACTIVITIES OF FESTIVE SOCIABILITY

Having identified families, friends and age groups as the basis of the social networks through which the Fallas attract and retain their members, it is now time to analyse the distinctive character of the sociability which pervades their activities. For analytical purposes, play, humour, comensalism and work will be examined separately as the main constituents of festive sociability. In practice, however, these and other constituents amount to a continuous flow of overlapping and interrelated experiences forming an integrated whole. The dominant mood is, of course, joyous and festive, but some occasions in the festive cycle give rise to moods of solemnity, disappointment, frustration and even anger. It is important to bear in mind that there is a pressure in the Fallas to keep these non-festive moods in perspective by subordinating them to the dominant one.

(i) Play

The Falla's sociability gives great importance to play. In fact, as Huizinga and Gadamer have shown, festivities are a whole play themselves (Huizinga, 1972: 35; Gadamer, 1991: 66). Fallas include many overlapping plays, interacting in a complex

variety of playful ways. Festive play is diverse and complex. The acts of wearing a costume, putting on fancy dress or parading, to mention just a few examples, also have the rules and space of a play. Fallas re-fashion the oldest forms of play and mix them up within a contemporary festive framework of rules which includes the culture of contemporary games such as sporting competitions.

It is not possible here to describe and fully enumerate all the forms of play that are present in the Fallas. I am only going to present a brief classification of them. Play may be divided between the regular forms that underlie the sociability of the Casal during the year, intensifying during the Festival days, and the special forms of play that characterise the Festival itself. I will choose some of the most characteristic which also have major significance in most of the 'festive plays'. In this case typicality, and festive centrality, match with what is relevant at the level of theory. The first will be the extensive and deeply rooted sort of joking games that I shall call 'joke competitions'. They have relevance in showing that there is a model of festive interaction which is critical but not reducible to rational argumentation. The second will be what I shall call 'comic adventures'. They are the contemporary expression of the crazy satire, the inheritors of the Carnival's *diablada* in popular European culture (Bakhtin, 1987: 239).

Musical forms of play are essential to the regular sociability of the Festivity and something widespread throughout the Valencian Region, as I shall show in Chapter VII. Theatre is another relevant activity which in some Fallas, such as in Godella, has also had significant implications for the cultural life of the locality. Sporting activities are another feature of the Fallas today, each Falla having its teams for popular sports such as *futbito*, with its programmes of competitions, *intra muros*

and between Fallas, which culminate during the Festival days. Also, as I shall show in Chapter 6, games of luck such as lotteries and raffles constitute a main source of money for the association.

The most frequent forms of play are ‘table games’: cards, dominos and other popular games such as lotto or ‘the invisible friend’. These games usually take place after the meal in the Casal and are accompanied by playful banter or a joking conversation. The most traditional and highly typified game is a card game known as the *truc*, the trick, considered to be one of the traditional Valencian forms of card play.

Fallas display many elements of the agonistic nature of play. Fallas, as I shall explain in the next chapter, constantly compete with each other for a variety of prizes which are symbolically displayed with pride in the Casal. There is however a model of interaction, the ‘joke competition’, which underpins the sociability of the Casal and the artists’ workshop and monument. These playful duels of humour frequently become the centre of banter in the Casal or in the workshop. Participation in these spontaneous humorous ‘competitions’ is common. Actors may call these repartees “*piques*” or “*ficar-se l’un en l’atre*”. Participants joke among themselves by making irony and satire about each other, so that the one who ‘wins’ is the joker acknowledged as the most ingenious as judged by the laughs of the audience.

These sorts of interactive games have an improvised nature. As Simmel indicated, a characteristic of sociability is the playful use of language itself in conversations, just for the pleasure and joy of talking. These humorous exchanges usually take place when people eat together, play table games, engage in happy casual conversations or enjoy aimless conversation. They also amount to an implicit test of

how far you are 'into the thing'. They are in fact basic exercises of assessment and confirmation of trust in social relationships and friendships in a collectivity. They show how many things you share with the others, and how far you are involved with other members. When you start to be 'invited' to participate in intensive humorous dialogues you know that you are becoming a real member of the group.

A joke competition is basically a liberating 'mutual cleansing', a game consisting of laughing at yourself and at the others' caricatural aspects, pretentiousness and external appearances. The *pique* cannot be confused with lack of respect or resentment. It distinguishes between the inner being and the external manifestations that can be the object of caricature. The *pique* enables interpersonal proximity to coexist with mutual joking criticism, pushing each player to show what there is under the just punctured (*picat*) personal surface. Joking Fallers always differentiate between those who can follow the implications of this humour and those who cannot or do not like it - "people who do not take it well". These serious people are seen as having no flexibility; they are said to have "only a fixed point" and no sensitivity to move it. This quality is also captured in the expression "they have no strap". Flexibility is understood as necessary because in joke competitions each aspect of the external 'personage' may be penetrated by one player, who '*pica*' the other in a series of graded exchanges.

Engaging in joke competitions while playing cards, particularly the *truc*, which calls for high complicity and communication through body gestures, constitutes one of the most liberating exercises combining *tertulia*⁷, the joke and play. This joking interaction is also a spontaneous way of dealing with things in common, and involves several levels of discourse. For example, a competition between musicians,

some playing cornets and drums in the band, may incorporate an underlying satiric debate about the way to play a particular song and the mistakes of one or the other. But at the same time the conversation may involve a joking comparison with other aspects, such as their physical or personal characteristics, in relationship with the shared gestures required for communication when playing. Here the allusions to sexual activity are frequent ('cornets', 'drums', etc.). The players also try to construct shared feelings, attitudes or funny stories to lie about the value of their cards as a sort of deception to trick the others. At the same time they try to lower their opponents' morale by satirising the stories told by their opponents. This micro-festive situation of playing *truc* and running a joke competition is a highly patterned event in itself, with the cards being just an element of the macro-festive situation.

Elderly and middle aged women tend to focus on playing lotto, bingo and other card and social games. They are not so interested in *truc* and 'joke competitions'. However, a humorous atmosphere pervades their play as well. Young girls, by comparison, frequently get together with teenage boys to play *truc*, showing the same kind of capacity to play the game with all the drama it requires.

These forms of play intensify during the climax of the Festival when other activities, more typical of the Festival time, also occur. The most characteristic of them is playing with fireworks, an activity that is mainly carried out by children but also by adults who regain all the inventiveness of their childish games with fireworks, accompanying, helping and teaching their own children to play. Many other outside games are played by children in the streets, including the making of spontaneously constructed Fallas which are also burned with an invented representation of the event that includes fireworks and sometimes spontaneous criticism by the children.

Adults also play open air games and even stage inventive ‘adventures’ in the Casal or outside. They lose seriousness and behave in ways that seem crazy or childish ‘nonsense’ to an outsider. Humorous play, however, help Fallers to break with the seriousness and the formality required by the routines of normal daily life. The participants refer to all this with expressions such as ‘*desmadrarse*’. It literally means that you ‘separate from your mother’, so that you are out of control and you can escape to do what you like, like a child escaping the supervision of its mother: “we lose seriousness and *nos desmadrarnos*”. This festive, periodic avoidance of the most serious and constraining aspects of the role of the adult is fully acknowledged. As a father said: “we do silly, stupid things, even worse than the children would do”. Simple teasing predominates, like fighting a battle with left over bread, olives, peanuts or champagne, during a dinner or ‘creatively’ playing with fireworks like children do. I have also been told about other, cruder games by Fallers in different associations. Examples include: visiting someone on the pretext of some invented or real business at lunch or dinner time, and eating all their food while the person is distracted; games of ‘bobby-knocking’ (for example ringing or knocking on doors in the area of a rival Falla, and running away); letting off fireworks at unexpected times and places, urinating on someone from the top of a step ladder while putting up decorations in the street at night; or dressing up other members of the Falla as fictitious personalities.

(ii) Humour

Humour is a prominent feature of the Falla, both in the form of the monument and in terms of typical interactions among members. It permeates festive sociability, like

sociability itself, in a global, unifying manner. It helps to prevent certain events, which could be called ‘comic’, from being separated from the others as the only ones with humour. Humour is so omnipresent that, as a member said, “we do not have *Fiesta* without humour”. So, humour is central to that ‘festive atmosphere’ which includes the feeling of harmony running through daily conviviality. The most distinctive moments of living together in festive sociability are intrinsically related to the telling of funny anecdotes and jokes that create a particular atmosphere pervading the whole of festive life. Humour features strongly in particular meetings, social relations and events in the course of the year; but it is stepped up during the Festival days.

There are key regular encounters that take place during the year in the Casal. The first one is eating together, usually for the regular Friday dinner, the traditional *soparet*. These moments are recalled most vividly by the elderly as a sign of the old ‘good times’ which are linked to the present. Comensalism, in association with humour, is so important that it is understood by participants as the main way of ‘being with’ others and ‘feeling’ the good spirit or atmosphere, the Falla’s ambience. It is also the best indicator of the Fallas’ progress during the year. Meetings of friends in the Falla to play cards, dominoes, etc., normally after eating together, are a second occasion for sharing good jokes or for teasing. Third, as I shall show below, humour occurs in the context of the work that participants do for the collective. Fourth, as I shall detail in Chapter VI, humour is found in formal meetings, usually for organising activities or debating aspects of the management of the association.

Humour increases significantly as the pace of festive sociability builds up during the festive period, thereby acting as a medium of interaction with the public.

The monument and other outside events, such as parades and meals in the street, put the Falla's humour on the street, but this is also true of set pieces such as the Presentation or the Exaltation. Humour, as I shall detail in the corresponding sections, is particularly relevant in these events. Satirical criticism embodied in the Cavalcade or in the monument place humour at the centre of the Falla's understanding of the Public Sphere. Parodies and jokes occur in the Presentation; and the second part of the Offering relieves the tension of the first, serious part through dancing, singing and joking. These events develop with a tremendous rhythm and intensity. Perhaps humour helps to explain how it is that Fallers can be so energetic with so little rest and sleep?

Certainly humour cannot fully answer this question, but Fallers attach a great importance to its liberating and communicational potential. The festive period requires an increase of energy to maintain such a period of activity. One of the energy sources, but not the only one, is provided by humour. Bergson's thesis (Bergson, 1986:105) about the break up of the routines of social life through laughter and Freud's ideas (Freud, 1988: 1.095 ff.) about the liberation of energy through jokes are applicable here and are confirmed by the Fallers' own experience. According to the participants, humour reduces their inhibitions and helps them to be more out-going: "It is a way of exteriorising what is repressed. Fallas are also a way to eliminate the repression that chains you during the year". The humorous talk and communication help Fallers to express themselves in an atmosphere of trust and to say things which they would not normally say. As a participant said, "you trust people and speak freely, half-serious and half-teasing, and so express yourself". They express repressed

motives, reveal intimate things about themselves, and disclose their weak personal points. It is a sort of catharsis.

Humour is also a vehicle for self-criticism, self-questioning and the expression of the real self. As I showed earlier, humour calls for trust and shared knowledge which facilitate self-expressiveness in the sociability of the Casal. The intensification of humour and festive sociability brings out self-questioning: “I laugh at my own shadow, so that later the others will laugh at me”, “I expose my weaknesses” and “I laugh at myself and the others”. Fallers are fully aware of the therapeutic effects of what goes on in the name of good humour. Some participants also suggest that they can speak more loudly during these days in interaction with laughter: “You feel phenomenal afterwards /.../, because the adrenaline flows, and you can shout and speak loudly in the street. You feel great when you are in the window or in the door and you shout: ‘Mariaaaaa!’. It is very good to feel free to shout in the Festivity.”

The consequence of this is that some aspects of a more real self come to light. As a Fallera said: “The internal self was repressed, the authentic being /.../. When I laugh I explode, I break with formality and seriousness. Then the true being shines through, who is like a child and appears free. I then say: this is what I am”. The real self is said to be “less serious”, more “popular”, more “like everyone else is” in personal depth. This sense of equality in things that are deep-down, common and popular is very different from the abstract, ‘formal equality’ of the constitutional state. This ‘popular imperative’ of the Falla’s sociability is playful enough to caricature the rigidity and the seriousness of people in thrall to the ‘formal imperative’. These people have a bad image in the Festivity because they are unable to throw off formality and deal with others as personal equals.

This humour is considered to be basic to the identity of Valencians. They frequently characterise themselves as “*socarrons, guasons, burlons*”⁸, which are idiosyncratic dialect words and difficult to translate. They are also used to describe their humour. They see themselves as Mediterranean lovers of “*juerga*” and “*cachondeo*”⁹ in the streets. Festivity, joy and diversion in the street are seen as typical of Valencians and as a part of the “Mediterranean festive nature”. As a Fallera said: “We are not serious people, we like to do these things. We are *juerguistas*, we like Festivity”. This humour is also characterised as acid, critical and satirical, but members repeatedly use the word “*socarro*” to refer to it.

Humour and language are intimately related. Local Fallers say that the peculiarities of Valencian make the apparent harshness of this humour much less hard-hitting for those who understand the language. The worst word or the crudest topic are said to be softened or to become mild because of the particular properties of the language used to express humour. A Fallera said that “in Valencian the crudest words do not cause harm”, and other Fallers added that this would be true “even for a priest in the pulpit”. He made a reference to Valencian comedies and other forms of popular literature in which priests are sometimes depicted as very comical-like characters in Carnival. This comment is perhaps an exaggeration if taken to represent priesthood now, but it still has a grain of truth in one sense: the Valencian forms of popular religion, loosely associated with the Official Church, are not divorced from humour and Festivity, as I shall show later on.

(iii) Comensalism

Many important Falla symbols are associated with food: the *paella*, the *bunyol* and the local vegetables that cover the monument, doubling their function as agricultural metaphors of sex in the monument as well. This is not accidental, since festive sociability is characterised by eating together: “Here the days of Fallas are very much something of meal after meal”. Members and non-Fallers associate the Festival with sharing meals, but comensalism is a permanent feature. The regular gathering for dinner, as the core of meetings during the year, is the moment, as I wrote above, in which the spontaneous side of organising the festivity is produced. Meals, both at the time of preparation and eating, also reveal the type and degree of shared knowledge and the sort of bonds of the collective. They are at the centre of the good atmosphere of unity and harmony that characterise a large part of festive social life. Members compare different Fallas with reference to this ‘good atmosphere’. After having commented on other Fallas, for example, a participant’s visiting friend said in a group discussion: “ This Falla has brotherhood, sense of neighbourhood, the dinners, the good *ambiente*”. The quality of the food is not the most important thing, but the social meaning and the festive bonds that exist between members are most important.

The effervescent collective preparation of the meal and the bubbling joy of the people eating together reinforce the essential bonds of the community. Comensalism unites people in the celebration and confirms their pre-existing bonds, anchored in trust and shared knowledge. It also restores a joyful sense of togetherness that renews the links between members. The basic feature of eating together is sharing the food, but joking conversation and play also complete the *tertulia* till late in the evening or night. As a senior Faller put it:

‘We like to eat together even if it is just a modest *bocadillo*. We like to be together in the meal during the days of Fallas because in this way, we are in the place where the Festivity is. But during the rest of the year it also helps you to get out of the monotony of your house, of your story, so we have a change and can breathe a different air.’

The underlying model of Falla comensalism is that of the family. The round shape and large dimensions of the *paella* are ideal for this adaptation of the original sense of a family meal for the sake of festive community.

Collaborative meals and the popular Friday night dinner, known as *sopar de sobaquet*, are other types of symbols of the Falla’s comensalism and spirit. Communal meals are assembled from the separate dishes that ‘nuclear families’ have previously cooked at home. The interesting point here is that these meetings usually have the right quantity of food, even if members do not know exactly how many persons are going to come. There is implicit knowledge, which I shall explain in the next Chapter, about the timing, the sort of gathering, etc., and it works. The typical dinner is like a ‘sacred dinner’ for the participants, a sort of communion, and it precedes (sometimes overlaps with) organisational meetings. Each member brings a baguette, the *bocadillo* or *entrepà*, and something else to be shared: salad, peanuts, crisps, cakes, etc.

Members explain that the regular dinner is an additional impulse or a source of enthusiasm to go to the Casal on Friday evening, so that you are able to forget the temptations of TV and avoid the isolation of the sofa in your house after a hard working week. For the Festival’s special nights food is normally prepared for a large number of people, and the cooking is a spectacle in its own right. The importance, size and universality of the popular meal in European Carnival culture, such as Bakhtin

emphasised, is still with us. Fallas normally have enormous *paellas* or barbecues that can provide food for up to two hundred people, or even to the whole neighbourhood. Barbecues are specially designed, in Falla Ecuador, for more than one hundred and sixty people. The enormous paella dishes in Godella are also used to make a gigantic omelette for eight hundred people, members and neighbours alike. A regular common meal may require that fifty Spanish omelettes, twenty kilos of sausages, thirty kilos of meat, etc., have to be cooked by the collective.

The work of preparation and cooking is a part of the spectacle itself, and it attracts the public to the celebration. In Godella the turning of the enormous omelette, done with specially designed cranks, brings many of the neighbours together to participate and eat. The competitions of *paellas*, which are cooked on the street late at night, are paid for by each association and are open to the participation of neighbours and the public, with a general invitation to all the visiting crowd afterwards. The potential to make the meal inclusive is strong: everybody is invited to eat and cook. Fallers may even vacate their seat to welcome a participant neighbour.

The shared meal, and comensalism in general, is incompatible with monetary interest, selfishness or failure to be generous with time and work for the Falla. I shall explore the implications of the shared meal in relationship with internal boundaries and instrumental behaviour in the next chapter. The importance of the bar, and then of comensalism, in relationship with the organisation of the Casal will be discussed in Chapter 6. Comensalism is also, as I shall show in Chapter 7, central to the Falla's symbolic universe and sense of transcendence. But at this point I shall look at the space, the organisation of people and the 'strategies' of festive comensalism.

Shared meals reveal the internal sub-group differences between members. They also reflect the degree of openness towards other people, and so demarcate the external boundaries. As I showed above, the making of collective meals, especially paellas in the streets, and inviting the neighbourhood to participate show a desire to broaden horizons to enter into dialogue with outsiders and to integrate new people. Meals are the occasions for discussing potential exclusions or internal differences of any type. For, like families, comensalism divides groups: children eat first, and later adults and young people gather in separate spaces which are their habitual sitting places. Eating delineates imaginary rooms in the Casal. This distribution of the 'eating space' also marks out 'territory' for other activities, such as assemblies or card playing. When the group uses the street during the Festival days this territorialisation is projected on to the space outside. Each age group is also divided into smaller ones as a consequence of personal affinities, shared activities in the Falla, friendships and family membership.

Groups are large, and the tables are long enough for many people, but groups and individuals tend to keep to a particular space. They amount to what I shall call 'comensalism strategies' which permit segregation but without undermining the sense of an 'eating unity'. The complexity of this is an example of Simmel's ideal of sociable 'fine tact' and indicates that the physical action of eating is only one aspect of the broader effervescence of the group. These strategies are only one aspect of this wider eating culture, and are highly reflexive from the point of view of sociability.

Eating and conversation are complementary. As a prominent Faller said in the main speech of a Presentation ceremony: "This is a country in which rice is conversation". Meals are the place for talk, self-expression and a good *tertulia*

between friends who share food and things to talk about. The natural subject is the Festivity itself: many spontaneous ideas, feelings and joking micro-negotiations develop in this context. Topics about the neighbourhood or locality, daily affairs of the families and TV are also discussed. Moreover, the meal cannot be separated from discussion of the weather (and nature in general) in harmony with the rhythm of the festive movement. Thus, conversations in the Casal in Winter are different from those that occur during the springtime street dinners. On the other hand, the rhythm of the series of meals and of communication, accelerates, as does festive sociability, as the Spring approaches. Table language consequently changes in step with every activity that feeds into the festive world¹⁰. This is the Falla's way of up-dating the old *symposium*, which Bakhtin also characterises as European popular culture's 'Banquet' (Bakhtin, 1987:250).

(iv) Work

The literature on Festivity usually overlooks the importance of sociable work. Festivity, as I said before, is normally contrasted to work in general; and work is usually neglected during the all-year-long preparation of the festival and during the festive days. But a very peculiar type of festive work exists in the Fallas. Play, humour and comensalism are not enough to define festive sociability and the identity of participants. Working for the Falla is seen as the clearest expression of what the participants call "fighting for the Falla", which demonstrates that you are a true *Faller*, being there when needed. The participants' vocabulary of terms for this condition of being ready to work is very explicit. They frequently use the expression "being there" for the person who takes care of the work aspects of Festivity.

This is acknowledged even by people who have been in the Falla for only one year. An ex-Fallera, who had been a participant for a brief time, said about her friends in the Falla: “People who are true Fallers-Fallers work a lot/.../ They are addicted to it”. This appreciation is totally confirmed by every member. A senior member said, emphasising the cyclical nature of this labour: “ Fallas are work, work and work in order to start again”. Sometimes this festive labour is described by seniors who have extensive public responsibilities in the Festivity as a great sacrifice that comes with responsible involvement in the community.

Notice however that even this ‘sacrifice’ is not devoid of humour: “You are there to offer a festivity to the locality, and so you start by being humorous in yourself”. This is because festive work and sociability complement each other in the all-embracing and unifying features of the central activities of sociability. The presence of humour makes work easier and enjoyable, festive. A committed senior worker said: “I like to go; it is the atmosphere. You know the huge amount of jokes and teasing, all the silly things that are said. You have a good time but also work”. An example is the administration of the Falla’s lottery, which involves a financial exchange between the people who go to the Casal to pay in or collect money (or lottery tickets). This apparently limited exchange calls for a big commitment on the part of the members who are responsible. However, it also means being involved in frequent encounters with people who enjoy chatting or planning events, and who may end up playing cards, watching TV, and having a drink with snacks that sometimes develops into an improvised dinner. Another example is band rehearsals. It is an intensive training but it takes place in a context of “joking and teasing and being happy together” and “deciding in common what we’d like to play.”

The 'nesting' of festive work in wider sociability is clearly appreciated when sociability is weakened and/or when its equality principle is in question. This occurs, for example, in early Autumn when there is need of work and money, but only a few people have returned to the Casal's social life. The workers then feel very lonely and make their discontent clear. For example, on an unsuccessful Friday night, the lottery staff were despondent during my interview but they still tried to keep their spirits up. This developed, however, into an acid satire. When I mentioned the distribution of work, they joked: "No, it is not that work is badly distributed. But as others don't do their work, then we have to do it for them to be happy". Much worse is the feeling of a worker who is working and receives no help from others who watch. The face of another committed worker fell during my interview while he told me an anecdote about just such a case. He concluded: "I don't mind working, but I don't like to be treated as silly, and they didn't help me at all."

In general, as I shall show in the next chapter, the workers' focus of criticism is on the group known as the "Fallers of four days" who delay their participation until the Presentation or even the Festival days. But their criticisms also apply to any current members who act selfishly and others who are on the Committee but do not work. They are categorised as vain, and desiring only to *figurar*, which means that they concentrate on showing off their costumes and awards in the formal public ceremonies rather than in work.

The democratic principle of Falla's sociability, and Simmels' principle of an equilibrium between joy, vivacity and effort, are fully rooted in festive work as well, which is the main criterion of 'legitimacy' in the Falla regarding, for example, who may make suggestions or criticise them. As a senior ironically said: "the people who

like to criticise more are often the same people who work less”. Legitimacy is not mainly provided by argumentation then, as Habermas would have it (subordinating traditions to it), but by sociability’s equality which is revealed as much in joy as in festive work in the context of the tradition.

The tasks that professionals do for the Falla constitute a creative re-utilisation of modern professions and expertise, of the contemporary division of labour, for the purposes of the community. This modern knowledge is frequently co-ordinated in teams that accomplish various tasks demanding a range of different skills and expertise. I shall give a few examples. First, Commissions that construct their own monument need carpenters, painters, ‘Artexers’, and poets. Second, arranging the Presentation requires electricians, experts in sound and image, writers, decorators, and florists. Third, reconstructing or repairing the Casal involves builders, painters and electricians. Members usually borrow from their jobs the basic tools and sometimes even machinery and cars to be used in the Falla. The same happens with the women’s specialities, so that each feels impelled to give her particular *savoir fair* for the purposes of the collective. This is seen in cooking, cleaning, making dresses and fancy dress. Festive team work is a general feature of the Fallas.

Finally, my experience is that I started to be considered a Faller more when I engaged fully in heavy work in the Falla. I was advised by a ‘sacrificial’ Faller who kept the bar: “ If you want to get into this, the best thing you can do is work”. New problems, which I shall discuss in the next chapter, arise later because you have to discover the right moment to work in relationship with the ongoing activities of festive sociability. Finally, I received an award from the Local Assembly because of my work, but I still did not know the deepest essence of it. It is not a question of

beliefs or prizes but of 'living the tradition'. The knowledge of how to fit work into sociability is a reflexive matter of fine tact.

In conclusion, I shall recount a special, ephemeral moment. After a robbery in the Casal, the doors and a cupboard had to be repaired. We were three people: the Faller who was responsible for the bar; Amado, who was a professional carpenter and my friendly master in festive work, and myself. Far from completing the task quickly and professionally, as he would have done in his workshop, Amado invited us to put the screws in slowly, enjoying each little movement. It was like a festivity: spontaneously we took turns to hold the door, use the screwdriver and tell comic anecdotes. Nobody noticed the time passing. Amado said "we have all the time in the world here". The festive time allowed him to live his own time there. His heart, already sick, was finding a life there, in the Falla, away from his workshop. Amado died a few months later. His heart failed while he was doing his regular job.

CONCLUSION

There may be a temptation to regard sociability as a 'form' of social relations, the 'content' of which has no bearing on the way they evolve. In extreme cases sociability may even appear to lack substantial content: it is entirely 'for its own sake'. It is its own reward. What this Chapter has shown is that sociability is actually a product of identifiable social processes operating through particular social networks. Certainly, sociability is a form of social activity which is its own reward; but it does not occur in the abstract. Instead, it is experienced as a by-product of activities with concrete content, such as play, humour, comensalism and work. The distinctive sociability of the Fallas of Valencia lies in the fact that these four activities are co-ordinated and

oriented towards a collective festive celebration, spanning many different spheres of life and social categories. Nevertheless, as the next Chapter will argue, co-ordination is not automatic or simple. There is a tension within the Fallas between forces of unity and forces of diversity.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Joy, bright spark from the gods,/ Daughter of Elysium,/ Fire-inspired we tread/ Thy sanctuary./ Thy magic power re-unites/ All that custom has divided,/ All men become brothers/ Under the sway of thy gentle wings.” (Schiller’s and Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*, 2nd. strophe)

² It is important to stress the generalised use of this polyvalent expression, *buen ambiente*, which the participants ascribe to the peculiar joyful milieu, climate, ‘good air’ and environment of a gathering. It combines the qualities of the personal, social and natural ‘climate’.

³ The participants use the word ‘*pegar*’. It has a wide meaning which includes the transmitting, infecting and sticking of something.

⁴ It is important to know that in Fallas not every member of the family is formally registered, but families somehow participate in the internal social life. Ecuador, an exemplary Falla from the perspective of membership, now has 219 registered members. There are four big families with more than 12 registered members in each. There are also 42 nuclear families which have at least two registered members (one at least being adult). The nuclear families with only one registered member are 24. Finally, there are 51 children (38 girls and 13 boys) and 10 teenagers who are registered alone (without the adult members of the family being registered). This

shows the great importance that Fallas give to children. The adult population is quite balanced in gender terms (54 males and 58 females). Fallas are more attractive for female children and young women than for males of the same age. There are twice as many girls as boys (56 girls and 28 boys). Among teenagers there are almost three girls for every boy (17 girls and 6 boys). The Falla has 131 females and 88 males.

⁵ Fallas are also responsible for changes that occur in family life, particularly during the festive period. Also, Fallas provide a form of education and supervision of children and teenagers.

⁶ A high percentage of members are children up to the age of 16 years old. In Ecuador, for example, 39% of members are under 16. There are twice as many girls as boys.

⁷ *Tertulia* is a form of gentle and playful conversation which may include debate but subordinates it to a feeling of enjoying talk and company first. It is frequently practised in the streets by neighbours, in bars and, of course, in the Fallas.

⁸ These words are difficult to translate but they combine irony and satire with a highly comical and critical appearance. The first word is the noun associated with the Catalan verb ‘socarrar’, which means to burn something completely. The person who has this humour is then qualified as having the power of fire to burn something. ‘*Guasons*’ and ‘*burlons*’ are the sort of people who like teasing and kidding.

⁹ ‘*Juerga*’ (and *juerguista*) corresponds roughly with ‘to have an extremely high spirited, good time’ (a ‘reveller’); and ‘*cachondeo*’ is a polyvalent word from jargon which may be translated as a mixture of teasing and making a burlesque of people and events.

¹⁰ I have in mind Heidegger’s *Das Geviert*, the ‘Four-fold’: community, earth, sky and transcendence.

CHAPTER V

UNITY AND DIFFERENCES¹

The principles explained previously of festive sociability, its agents and central activities are responsible for the cyclical construction of the Festivity, but they also have to cope with a continuous tension; which mainly evolves in relationship to the guiding principle of equality and fraternal community. In this chapter I shall describe this principle and the tension between the forces of unity and the forces of difference. The former are inclusive and take the form of giving help, charity and sharing of festive knowledge in the context of a common festive project. The latter are evident in internal and external boundaries, which are also capable of creating segregation. Finally, the Fallas' brotherly rivalry and solidarity, which are reminiscent of tribal competition and mutual help between the parts of a social unit, are an interesting mixture of both an internal and an external boundary for each Falla in the wider network of the 'Fallera Family'. These boundaries also help to structure the Festivity.

1. EQUALITY AS BROTHERHOOD IN THE FESTIVE DEMOCRACY OF SOCIABILITY

Equality is defined in the Festivity as a consequence of a sense of brotherhood, which is part of festive sociability. A democratic sense of equality typical of sociability is reinforced by a deep sense of 'community brotherhood', which is guided by the family. Formal equality is provided by the equal payment of annual subscriptions as members of the association. But this means nothing without an effective engagement

in the activities of the community. Substantial equality is linked to concrete participation in a collective project, the construction of the community, which also provides “festive legitimacy”.

Fallas have a normative principle of fraternity, which implies togetherness and equality at the same time. One of its most characteristic manifestations is ‘*la germanor fallera*’, The Falla Brotherhood, an idealised, harmonic, fraternal, community of equals. The reality of this, even its effective existence, may be open to doubt, but nobody denies the power of the ideal. The omnipresent self-image of a big family, or brotherhood, a community of equals, works as a normative idealised principle, recognised as such by the Fallers, which shapes and legitimates the behaviour of its members. Brotherhood is also associated with a sense of unity and harmony, which are seen as desirable. This is why appeals to the community principle of *germanor* are frequent when there are conflicts or crises in a Falla, for example, during the years of economic crisis in the Falla Ecuador. The Falla’s written records of that period are full of explicit formulae of this principle of brotherhood. Equally, when there is a big argument in a formal assembly, it is common to remind members of this guiding principle.

The participants’ opinion varies about the degree of effectiveness of this widely recognised guiding principle. Most sceptics acknowledge that it is widely applied, but say that its effect is superficial, often inauthentic and always threatened by selfishness, differences and subgroups. From this perspective, the principle operates for the participants as a ‘Myth’, without practical effect on daily festive life. When asked, a senior president said: “ You think and live as brothers because you see the same people every day, get trust, and so you get in and greet, kiss everyone. It is

like if I would go to my house and would kiss my brother, my mother, and my wife. The same happens in the Falla, but it is only on the surface". He continued by indicating that personal interests and group differences always threaten the extension of the feeling of brotherhood of the Festivity. Optimistic members usually deal with this reality by saying that families also have divisions, conflicts and envy, but are normally able to remain united.

The sense of equality normally originates from the collective sharing of the set of activities associated with the Festivity that involve both working and festive moments, collaboration as much as joy. The model for this collective action is generated from the perspective of the family and its sense of fraternal equality. The effective 'rights' of the members, and their recognition, are seen as equal and legitimate in relationship to their real participation in a totality of collective activities. The 'rights' that matter do not come from a 'formal' law but from substantial involvement and compromise in shared festive action.

This paradigm of 'family equality' is experienced in many ways, but Fallers usually exemplify it in terms of their sense of sharing food on the common table. Communion at the festive table is therefore the model *par excellence* of substantial equality. The shared food on the table expresses equality but requires mutual collaboration in a common task: "You are entitled to a serviette, your knife and spoon. Also, if you have to get up to make the salad you get up. Here there are no distinctions of class". This sense of equality is potentially projected outwards, impelling people to organise meals for the neighbourhood and the visiting public. These meals, as I have shown in Chapter 4, express the drive to extend and generalise festive equality. Comensalism also incorporates the democracy of sociability, which interacts with the

sense of equality of the principle of brotherhood. Each member has, according to Fallers, a seat at the table regardless of profession and social class or status: “Here there are no differences of anything. You can be a professor, a builder or a sales person. Here you sit at the table and we are all equals. This is beautiful.”

The subscription, the *quota*, provides only a formal-legal right to 'share the same' in the community association. That means an equal portion of the meals, a voice in the formal assemblies, a vote, and equal rights to make a Faller career: “ the directives are the same for everybody because you equally pay the subscriptions”. However, only effective participation within the collective will make sure you have a happy meal and conversation because you have real consideration and 'festive legitimacy'. If the exercise of formal equality is not accompanied with real commitment to the Festivity there is no festive legitimacy. This is the case of the sector of members known as “Fallers of four days”, interestingly also known as *Fallers de quota*. They pay the monthly contribution, but only come at the end to enjoy the days of the Festival, not fully participating in the all-year long preparation for the Festivity. This type of Faller is criticised by the groups who keep the festive sociability going during the year. They constitute a sort of second class Faller in the associations; their lack of participation loses them the festive legitimacy that the others have. They are seen as getting joy from the dedication and commitment of others, something that is contrary to the basic democratisation of sociability. Interestingly this is the key internal boundary of the Festivity. It is associated with fairness and equality of dedication to the accomplishment of a collective project.

The committed Fallers, however, according to some of the ‘Fallers of four days’, may also fail to see difficulties of their own. They may sometimes constitute a

strong group, perhaps unaware of its own dynamic of exclusion. Some of the less dedicated 'Fallers of four days' criticise the dominant group because of their monopoly of information and their tendency to be a self-replicating group. Others say that they have unavoidable obligations, normally with their jobs (including house keeping), that make their regular participation very difficult.

Fallas are not equal for the participants. The previously described sense of equality also governs (in the Fallas researched) the participants' differentiation between several types of Fallas. Members perceive a big contrast between the 'special Fallas' and their 'modest Falla'. A few rich Fallas, known as the 'special category,' have commercial associations with outside agencies (and other ways to deal with internal hierarchies, money and prizes) while another type of Falla, the most widespread, the 'modest Falla', is based on a different understanding of the Festival, maintaining a community that keeps sociability alive. I will give a fuller description in Chapter 6 but I anticipate it here because this aspect is crucial for my argument on the reflexivity of sociability.

2. PRESSURE TOWARDS UNITY AND INTEGRATION

The previous principles which focus on the understanding of an 'extensive sociable community of equal brothers' strongly shape the perception of 'helpers' and 'non helpers' as well as the forms of altruism and charity that are present in the Festivity. They also shape the ways in which help and collaboration occur in events and activities. A type of knowledge is articulated with these practices of mutual help. This knowledge is actively reproduced, and 'remembered', in specific shared group activities which are practised by the members who share in them year after year in the

context of the Falla's permanent sociability. These activities increase, overlap and grow in rhythm with a succession of meetings, which culminate in the climactic assembly of the whole group during the festive period.

(i) Help and collaboration, altruism and charity

The community demands the help of each member. Help and collaboration are entailed by the principles of the democracy and substantial equality of sociability: "enjoy as much as collaborate". However, this demand for help is not always specified as a series of explicit rules. The pervasive nature of sociability impregnates every activity with an implicit demand for collaboration and help: "the group demands the collaboration of everybody", "you create a sort of obligation to help in what you can do". This need of help is more evident in Fallas than in other smaller groups because many activities demand a big co-ordinated effort, such as organising the Presentation, cooking omelettes for 800 people or preparing a big dinner.

Normally help is given and is effective. There is an agreement about the importance of mutual help in the Falla. It is based on long-term established personal relationships and mutual knowledge. Sometimes, as a Fallera said, people may obtain more help from other participants than from the family itself. A mother, senior Fallera, said: "People help you a lot. For example, when there is a child's party. There is help: people help each other ". But children also agree that in the association there is an atmosphere that includes help. A child, ex-FM, said: " You meet with many people that know you, love you and help you".

It is clear, though, that some help more than others do "it is a pity sometimes because some people don't give you a hand when you need it most". The people who

go to the Falla through the year present themselves as the model of those who systematically practise collaboration, while the people who go only to the main events of the last period, the 'Fallers of four days', collaborate less. Thus, in general, a first criterion for distinguishing helpers from non-helpers would be division between 'all year long Fallers' and 'Fallers of four days'.

Aside from this difference of commitment towards the Festivity it is possible to find characteristics that are ascribed to the 'good helper'. First, the good helper does not need to be asked: he or she is just there helping. Also he/she does not look to see if others are helping or not. The good helper just wants to give help and obtains a personal satisfaction from so doing and helping the collective: "it is the wish to do it", "collaboration itself is the prize", "it grows naturally on you", "you do it because you like it". It is also felt as a responsibility for the community that comes from involvement: "you are involved". The contrast between the idealised and the effective existence of 'equality in unity' may be 'measured' by the level of help. The Director of a band, proud of the exemplary unity of his band, but thinking that the Falla is another matter, put it this way:

"You offer help to everybody if we look carefully at what we do. If we all would be equal then we would offer it to everybody. This would be unity, and we wouldn't have to demand help from anyone. We would go all there and would naturally say 'I go too' and so later 'there is enough people, no need for anyone else'. In the band we sometimes decorate the street with flags, that is a task for two people, but ten or eleven of us go there, teasing each other, making jokes, all in a Festivity. People have to offer, you don't have to demand it"

As I shall show in Chapter 7, help and altruism in relationships with unity are behind many metaphors of transcendence. Intense feelings of solidarity and altruism develop in the association. They are directed towards the Falla itself and towards the wider community. They make tangible a continuation of the Falla's emphasis on 'offering', in this case the giving of time and work towards collective issues. There are Fallers who sacrifice important aspects of their private lives for the benefit of the common public activity of the Falla. Even money loses importance; and there are Fallers who anonymously make donations to the association. Equally Fallers help other Fallers with difficult activities like moving house or finding a job. Altogether, the Festival makes what a member called a *coto*, an area of social life that is relatively closed and that presents aspects of internal solidarity. The history of the Fallas recalls solidarity in relationship with people in difficulties in the neighbourhood, such as widows. In the Falla 'El Cudol' a widow, grandmother of one of my informants, was able to support her family by promoting raffles, using the name and infrastructure of the Falla. In these respects, Fallas may present features that constitute a continuation of the Guild sense of solidarity². He said: "My grandmother was Fallera all her life. She was also the *rifera* of the Falla [the one who organises raffles in the Falla]. It was her *modus vivendi*, her living. She was a widow and that made her living: raffles. She did everything: she bought the numbers and sold them, but the Falla didn't take the benefits. The Falla acted as the legal agency which allowed her to sell in the streets."

Fallas also practise charity. They participate in campaigns against cancer and poverty. They contribute to the Third World, in conjunction with institutions of the Church, like Caritas, by participating in charity spectacles where the Falla performs theatre or playback (Godella). Fallas are usually very sensitive to sicknesses, the

handicapped and mental illness, something that is reflected in daily talk in the Casal, with people in difficulties in the locality. An example of the extent of this is the link between the Falla of Godella and a young girl from Galicia (Northern Spain) who needed a difficult operation in a Hospital in Valencia. Her family had no money, so the Falla, having no previous link with the girl, provided the family with an apartment and treated the girl as the Honorary Children's Fallera Major. The Falla even appeared in the press and in a national magazine for this reason. As a consequence of this link the girl remains a Fallera now and regularly comes to visit the Falla. Her family offered a dinner and gifts for the Falla as a sign of gratitude, during the Festival.

(ii) Shared knowledge and integration

Fallas mobilise and co-ordinate large numbers of people, especially during the festive period: members, visitors and neighbours. This is possibly thanks to an accumulation of shared knowledge, anchored in a cyclical repetition of experiences.

This knowledge is in the tradition but it is recreated in interaction with contemporary culture and institutions, enriched and updated at the same time as the transmission of the tradition. It is a part of the Festivity in general but at the same time it interacts with the distinctiveness of each Falla. This is a type of knowledge that everybody may acquire in the Festivity because is not too specific, not professional knowledge. It depends upon a corpus of shared knowledge in the member community. It is mainly assumed and tacit, but at the same time it is co-ordinated without explicit direction, norms or decisions.

The cooking of a gigantic omelette or organising a fancy dress parade are models of these tasks. "Everything is stipulated without any norm", said a participant.

Adults convey this type of knowledge and, as I showed in relationship to work, even have strategies to avoid free rider problems (Olson 1965).³ Some of these collective tasks have no predetermined or regular number of people to accomplish them. Their rhythm increases at the same time as people join in. At the beginning of a big task a number of people may try to avoid fully engaging in it, but later on there is a rapid mobilisation to accomplish it, so that the task is done well. Ultimately, there may be too many volunteers: “At the beginning everybody is a bit lazy, but afterwards everything is completed”.

Other smaller activities are organised by groups of friends and families who specialise in them year after year, preserving the practice and the memory. For example, making the fancy dress costumes and preparing the humorous sketch in the parade. The small group is convened by the most experienced or motivated. The meetings are extremely funny, and members like to recall their previous disguises and sketches: “Do you remember the fancy dress costumes when Loli was the Festival Queen?”. These small activities interact with others in a way that is clearly understood by members. In conjunction they make great displays of collective movement or representations, such as in the parade or costumes or the Presentation. The joyful, satiric and critical figures in the parade have their origins in the richness of the festive sociability of the Falla’s groups of friends, which are reflexive and unforgettable.

This shared knowledge of the tradition is interwoven with contemporary life. The first example is labour. New knowledge coming from modern expertise mixes with the old sense of collective labour. The tacit rule is that the one who knows best organises and directs the team. Thus, for example, members who are electricians,

builders or telecom workers direct the installation of electrical devices and the big awning which covers the street outside the Casal. The same principle is used to differentiate between men's and women's work. Fallas reproduce the gender divisions of the family, but not because they are more sexist than the general society. In the Falla each does what he or she knows best, and this applies to cooking or cutting material to make costumes.

A part of the work depends on knowledge of the particularities, and requirements, of the Festivity in general and on the special routines of a particular Falla. For example, in a Falla a large table may be constructed (Godella), while in others it is just a question of collecting little tables (Ecuador). The particular festive occasion indicates what it is necessary to do. A great part of the shared knowledge about work depends on knowledge of the Festivity and the knowledge of the tools, and resources of any kind, that the association has to meet its requirements.

The Falla's comensalism is the second example of that interweaving between the shared knowledge of tradition and modern experiences and institutions: Fallas produce a re-elaboration of the style of community meals. The experience passes through the filter of the modern nuclear family and is projected towards the new 'big family' created in the community of the Falla. The first case of this re-elaboration concerns meals of co-operation (see above). Each family prepares something that approximates to what they would eat at home. The result is food for the people who come, sufficient despite not knowing the number beforehand. The principles of equality are inseparable from the activity itself. For example, people criticise members who do not personally prepare a meal, saving time and effort. In Ecuador, a member who systematically brought market prepared food, (usually a cooked

chicken), was criticised in the *comidilla* in the following terms: “look! he has bought the chicken again”.

A second case concerns cooking for the key celebrations. Wives may teach their husbands how to cook paellas, probably at home. The chief cook of the Falla Dr. Valls explained how men applied this new skill to cooking for fifty or a hundred people. The festive ethos expands the scale of the action; people rise to the challenge of performing the familiar, domestic task for many more people. This is done in an atmosphere of consensus about such things as the details of quantities. The meal is taken in the street with the consent of the authorities and residents (as I will show below) because the Fallers consider this their own territory. The effect of this ‘festive knowledge’ is the application of the dynamic of family life (the contemporary nuclear family) to the life of the wider community.

The third case of this re-elaboration of tradition with the inclusion of present-day items concerns the musical parade and the monument. As I shall show in Chapters 7 and 8, contemporary parades have not lost their connections with their ancient roots. In Dr. Valls parades include a band and a folk group. There is a common knowledge between the bands and the Fallers. It is tested in parades and celebrations. For example, members may detect a mistake or make new suggestions. The constant checking of the pieces is done through the rehearsals, but it also responds to shared sensitivity in the community. This includes an established rhythm for the parades and their phases, the common knowledge (and feeling) of a repertoire, etc. This allows the band to make people move without hesitation. On the other hand, the monument, as I shall show later, recreates old myths and traditions with the help of scenes or techniques of construction which are modern. The participants share those topics but

they also share the deep meaning of burning the monument, even its mysterious side. The burning of the monuments is the event that brings most people together, normally without any 'problem of order'.

The festive actors who possess a lot of background knowledge are senior members. As I have shown before, they have worked out a tacit strategy for avoiding free riders. They have the discourse that I described for the 'good helper' and they know the potential problems beforehand because they know the routines of every year. The same structuring of the activities and events year after year means that the long-term Fallers accumulate a stock of knowledge and experience.

The general tacit knowledge of the Festivity is behind the potential to socialise, integrate and unite the *a priori* of transcendence. A great deal of specific shared knowledge, and its dynamic in the annual construction of the Festivity, is a part of the secret of the Festivity as a place for integration. Newcomers can witness this power of the Fallas to integrate. In the Festivity, people of different linguistic and geographical origins live together with the locals, sharing tasks in a common project. However, the main internal boundary in the Falla, as I will show below, indicates the unequal degree of engagement and knowledge in shared tasks. The newcomers who have integrated and are now seniors assess the recent integration of other newcomers by indicating how much they work and participate.

Finally, the 'legitimisation' and the symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 110) of the Fallas also rely, as I shall show in Chapter 7 and 8, on the transmission of knowledge. Only this high concentration of shared knowledge can produce collective transcendent emotions, very contagious in Fallas. For example, collective crying as the expression of a collective spirit which a participant described

as the “same faces of joy” exhibited in parades depends on it. This is why Fallers, like priests before them, still have the key instruments for performing rituals. However, Fallers may sometimes take this knowledge for granted in relationship with internal and external differences and boundaries.

3. THE PRESSURE ON BOUNDARIES AND DIFFERENCES

(i) External boundaries

Fallers usually divide people in the neighbourhood, and sometimes people in general, into members (and people close to them) and non-Fallers. The committed members live the Festivity from inside; they are involved the whole year and feel themselves responsible for the effort that makes it possible: “we fight for the Falla and /.../ we are there”.

A more exact classification can be made. It is possible to identify seven groups:

1. The strongly committed ones (‘to be there’).
2. The ‘Fallers of four days’.
3. People whose membership is not continuous. This is very frequently the case of the young.
4. Sympathisers who go to the general Festivity in the city, possibly getting involved also in some celebrations of their local Falla and perhaps also making spontaneous small bonfires with groups of friends.
5. The people who stay in the City or locality because they have to go to work. They may be sympathisers, with a lower degree of participation or will suffer if they are not and so cannot escape the noise and chaos.

6. The people who escape the city for skiing or similar opportunity in the holiday market because they are not interested in the Festivity nor have a better option.
7. The anti-Fallers, who normally are neighbours living close to the Casal and who are disturbed by all the 'movement' of the Festivity. Some politically and ideologically oriented intellectuals, normally subsumed under the common denomination of 'progress', may also tend to see Fallas as "conservative" and "too folkloric", some being even derogatory and prejudiced against the Fallers, whom they may even describe as "people without brains".

I have already dealt with the first and second cases; I shall concentrate here on the rest.

Fallers know, as a part of their shared knowledge, what it means to live the Festivity from outside the association. Some Fallers have the experience of being temporally 'out' and are able to describe the main differences between living the Festivity in a Casal and living the general atmosphere of the Festivity as a whole, without participating in the making of it. The experience of these people is very similar and may be summarised in three points.

1. There are two festivals at the same time: one is experienced through the Associations, from within. The other is an experience from without; it is a public event, organised by the Council during the festive days for the people of Valencia, visitors and tourists. The experiences are quite different.

2. Once you have experienced the Festivity in the association, if one year (for reasons such as lack of money, work, etc.) you experience only the 'general one'; you miss the sociability of the Casal; you recognise a sort of addiction to it. The general Festivity is not a good substitute. A Fallera explains:

The year that you are out, in which you don't belong to any Commission, you say to yourself: "What can you do?" Then you go to the centre of the City, and you see things there. But you live it very differently. If you have to move to a place to see something related to Fallas, that is a pain in the neck. If you are participating in a Commission you live the Festivity all day long, since you get up till you go to bed. You don't get out of your Commission"

There are exceptions. Some of the people who left a Commission could not stand the pace of work and socialising because they had to travel (reasons of work) or had other groups of friends (in general more 'cosmopolitan' people). They experienced life in the Casal as too demanding. There were expectations to work for the Festivity, and they preferred other 'work' or a variety of groups, hobbies, etc. These people still keep a link with the Festivity through the general side of it, organised by the city Council, and may even participate in some isolated events such as the *Ofrena*, particularly by making arrangements with a Commission to join them. It is common for people who are not in a Commission to dress for the *Ofrena* by asking a Falla's permission to join them, especially families who dress their children just for this ritual.

3. If you are living the Festivity from inside you have so much to do that you are not aware of other general aspects of the Festivity. It is common for members of the Commissions, especially from Fallas of the working class people on the outskirts or from other localities, to go to the centre of Valencia only for the *Ofrena* or to collect a prize (the compulsory activities integrated in the general program). Many participants said that they do not go to see the celebrations organised by the Council,

the huge spectacular and innovative special Fallas or other events organised by other distant Fallas.

Fallers are conscious of three main prejudices, which underlie the misconceptions that some outsiders have about the Fallas. The first concerns a wrong view of festive sociability. The people from outside may not see the harmony, conviviality and good atmosphere of the Casal. A member said: "The world of Fallas is not what people may perceive from outside, from outside the doors of the Casal. Inside there is a lot of conviviality". The second prejudice concerns the relationship between work, money, joy and selfishness. People from outside tend to have a misleading image of the Faller as someone who is always eating, does not do much work and uses the communal budget for big meals. According to them, this comes from a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about the all year long preparation of the Festivity, which costs a lot of money. These people, according to members, usually confuse the big meals of the final festive week with what Fallers really do during the year, and have no idea about how well the Falla looks after its money, never using it for particularistic purposes.

The third widespread prejudice is that the Festivity is extremely closed, and only to be enjoyed by the Fallers. This was the most repeated comment of the non-Fallers in the several spontaneous passionate *tertulias* involving Fallers and non-Fallers that I recorded in the neighbourhood. Fallers usually consider this accusation as unfair, and again a product of the lack of knowledge that some people have because they do not live the Festivity from inside.

In general, members say, Fallas are 'open access' associations. However, they indicate that there are some Fallas (the most important special Fallas), membership of

which depends on recommendations from existing members. Other Fallers self-critically acknowledge that in the past their Falla had been less open, implicitly assuming that the prejudice could contain a grain of truth, and so explaining to some extent the lack of knowledge about what goes on inside the Casal: “People in the neighbourhood are sometimes cold, perhaps because they don’t live the Falla from inside. Now the *Casals* start to be more open to the public; they are opening their doors more decidedly towards the streets. If there are more people who know what we do inside, there will be more people who will want to be Fallers”.

Fallers produce several sorts of explanations to defend the open nature of their association. The first highlights the origins of the Festivity. They indicate that the Festivity is for the neighbourhood or the locality and that it takes place in the streets: “The Festival is very much in the streets, nobody has the door closed”. This presence in the streets is consistent with the ancient origins of the Festivity, which were characterised before as anchored in the sociability of the streets. The definition of festive activity itself regards the street as its centre: “we don’t take the *mascletaes* [type of fireworks] into the Casal, and so with the rest of the Festivity”. Another account expresses the need for a dialogue with the neighbourhood and the public if the Festivity is to be successful. A third is driven by the basic regulating principle of a broad harmonic community of equals:

“If we don’t have the people, if we are alone, the Festivity will be very poor because it is necessary to have the participation of locals. We don’t go anywhere without it. This is why the parades, processions, the *Ofrena* for example, share a dialogue with the people who are there. Independently of all this there are acts explicitly prepared for the people from outside the Falla, so

they can also participate, like the paellas competitions, children's chocolate parties and so on".

This type of open activity constitutes a form of relationship between the Fallas and their sympathisers in the neighbourhood and the locality. Fallers are aware that they allow many people to live the Festivity close to them, because for them, as a member said, "the question is that if you want to enjoy and understand the Festivity you have to live close to it". Fallers feel an enormous responsibility to make the Festivity available to the public. The principle of brotherhood pushes them towards an idealised universalism. The Falla intends that other people should become integrated. The open invitation to the parade, open comensalism or the dancing in circles during the *crema* that invites new people to join represent this side of the self-image of the Falla.

Besides the drive of the principle of brotherhood there is another aspect that raises the effort of each Falla to gain more participants and to 'give' open celebrations to the public. As I shall show below, there is a competition between Fallas to offer more by exceeding their rivals' generous 'expenditure'. It is important not to forget that Fallas practise a peculiar sort of contemporary *Potlach*. Participants always compare their public activities (and the recognition they get as prizes), their capacity to offer joy in Festivity, with that of other rival Fallas.

This obsession with 'offering' also coexists, as in many churches, with another tendency towards self-enclosure in the 'Fallera family'. Regardless of what the Fallers say about their openness towards the neighbourhood, and to non-Fallers, my personal experience shows, as I said in Chapter Two, that their network is very tight, composed of people who share many particular issues and is reinforced by many emotional relations. But some intuitive members know this difficulty, even in the case of a

modest Falla. A reflective President was sensitive to this issue. He admitted, “many times the Fallers make a closed circle in the collective”, and that “there are also Fallers who do not want their money to go out of the Falla, to other people”. This attitude may be summarised with the expression: “those who want Festivity should have to pay for it”. Closure is also reinforced, at the general level of the overall Festivity, with the systems of prizes, career hierarchies, and other powerful activities of control of the organisational structure, directed by the Fallas’ co-ordinating agencies. This constitutes the formal structure of the *Fallera family*, which also acts as a festive social movement that, as a member explained, works as a *coto*, a territorial area reserved for members.

The most committed adults, however, have doubts about the extent to which the basic principle of brotherhood regulates even this wide ‘Fallera family’. For them, the effective way of being ‘in’ is fighting for the Festivity every day, working for it, and so feeling it inside. Many of them will say that the idea of *germanor fallera* is more a myth than a reality. However, it is interesting to note that, more than any other difference, it is always self-interest and internal rivalries because of competition that, according to members, prevent the realisation of this community-brotherhood of the broad Fiesta. The collective project of the Festivity is able to accommodate many differences, if the Fallers fight for the common project.

Turning now to non-Fallers, anti-Fallers and the excluded, ‘controlled membership’ is only practised to some degree by a few special Fallas. There is another type of incompatibility, or exclusion, which is as substantial as the form taken by the principle of equality. A typology of excluded people (perhaps sometimes self-excluded) would include first of all some of the neighbours who have to live with the

inconvenience of the Festivity. Interviews, but particularly the spontaneous neighbours' *tertulias*, which I converted into focus group interviews, gave me the opportunity to compare the opinions of participants and outsiders.

The main problems for outsiders are, first, noise, the most frequently mentioned by neighbours. It has created many conflicts. The Fallers acknowledge this but they expect people to understand. They usually say that the Festival is only for a short period of time, and that these people may also participate. The second problem concerns security, the potential danger of fireworks, (scorching of window frames, broken glass, etc.). There were conflicts in Godella, including a change of place for the Falla's Monument, after a complaint from an anti-Faller neighbour. Some people are also fearful of uncontrolled fireworks let off by the children. Third, there may be incompatibility with the demands of work - for example, having to get up early after a noisy night. Finally, problems of access and mobility arise due to the closure of streets, traffic, etc.

These neighbours have two options, depending upon their resources and free time. They may stay in the neighbourhood because they have to work or have no money. Alternatively, they may escape from Valencia for a break if they have the resources to move and obviate *Gemeinschaft* links. The majority, who stay in the neighbourhood, fall into three categories. First, are those who support and attend the festivities. The second may be in conflict with the Fallers, including sometimes taking legal action. The third case are people who have tried to make links with the Falla but have not always found, according to them, a very friendly atmosphere or equal treatment.

Fallas have a strong potential for integration due to their basic guiding principle of equality that extends easily to diminish the importance of differences. Exclusion occurs when the collective project of the Festivity is not shared, or a threat is perceived against the group.

(ii) Internal boundaries and conflict

Fire burns everything, but according to Fallers, it is precisely internal conflict, dissension, resentment and envy that are destroyed by the Fallas symbolised in their monuments. They are the sort of things that the 'unity' of the Falla sets aside for 'burning': "In these four days dissents, resentments, discrepancies are put aside. You say: 'I don't like you, but during these days I shall try to be kind to you'". The sources of conflict are basically associated with attempts to make profit or avoid collective work, so that the Festivity protects itself by creating a sharp, and fundamental, internal boundary against selfishness and lack of collaboration. Institutional party politics is also present in the Festivity, which may turn into a festive political arena. As far as party politics are concerned, the self-image of complete harmony and autonomy of the Fallas, driven by the ideal of brotherhood, does not correspond to reality.

Conflicts because of money and selfishness tend to be very open conflicts. The key idea is that you cannot cheat or make profit from the Falla. The emphasis is on social solidarity, and unity, over money. But when money is necessary for social solidarity and the common purpose, you have to have it. The greatest crises of a Falla are financial, caused by bad management. This creates divisions and mistrust among participants and neighbours, and is, according to a treasurer, very difficult to overcome (Ecuador). Also open conflicts occur when there is a disagreement about

the distribution of the common budget, and when money seems to be wasted, as was the case in the 'Falla. Avda. Burjassot' in 1997. The corresponding debate in the General Assembly significantly made several appeals to the ideal of brotherhood as a principle of reconciliation. Other less important situations also show the opposition of Fallas to selfish monetary behaviour. People who delay payment or do not bring the lottery money in time are severely criticised. Also, I shall show in Chapter 6, putting the bar of the Casal out to hire entailed criticism that the Falla should not be run as a business.

The second source of conflicts is collective work. Those who avoid working for the Festivity are stigmatised as free-riders. This discourages escaping from work; it is particularly evident with those who come only to eat and enjoy the final days: 'the Fallers of four days'. An interesting point here is that equal dedication, the shared committed work, legitimises enjoyment and, also, criticism. This shows the high value of an idea of community which shares work and effort, common sacrifice (equality of brothers), joy and knowledge in the search for improvements. The conflict is normally a latent one, because the Fallers of four days pay and are registered as members (formal democracy). The conflicts occur, and may be very sharp, when people are needed to work or when there is criticism of the work done by the 'committed workers'. In this last case, as I have shown above, the free-riders have no legitimacy. As I shall show in the next Chapter, power is structured according to this boundary.

The third source of conflict lies in the internal divisions caused by party politics. The most shared opinion between Fallers, which enhances an image of an autonomous harmonious community, may be summarised as follows: There are

different tendencies and affiliations, but apparently they coexist and cannot disturb the Festivity, keeping the Falla independent from politics. Again, comensalism is chosen as the example: any discussion ends happily with a common meal. A Faller, who considered himself a socialist, told me about his relationship with a member of a regionalist conservative party: “You know Enric, he is from UV. When we discuss, even argue about politics, five minutes later we sit together at the table, and as friendly as we’ve always been”. Some others see politically guided Fallers as very closed and narrow-minded people: “They have their own ideas that they want to impose on you”. I shall say more about politics in the next Chapter, but I must anticipate here that this self-image of harmony over party politics can not be fully maintained, at least in relation to the wide network of the Festivity. This is evidenced by the institutional and party links of its co-ordinating agencies.

The fourth source of conflict is personal disputes over power and hierarchy between subgroups. Some people, as a President said, have power because of the existence of a particular circle they have created in the community and 'consider themselves a bit like a boss'. But the internal hierarchical differences, personal and collective, are dealt with in other sections. Also, other internal differences include inequality at the level of class and status.

(iii) Class and status differences

Social inequality appears in each Falla and between Fallas. It is also associated with a general feeling of injustice. It is rooted in the common awareness that Fallas facilitate the making of money, the creation of jobs, and many other benefits for others and for the City, but they do not receive anything in return.

In a Falla social and economic differences affect the chances of becoming the FM because it implies spending a lot of money: "There are girls who cannot be FM because of the economic question". Sometimes there is no clear volunteer for this reason, something that, according to the participants, has happened several times in each Falla. In order to make things more equitable, Fallas have proposed several solutions. One was to eliminate having a big meal, paid by the FM, in a restaurant. They changed it to a more modest dinner in the Casal. The custom had generated a big difference in relationship to the incidence of class relationship in the Festivity. This was the experience of Dr. Valls and Ecuador. There was a time in which only rich people could be FM. However, given that this meal is a quasi-*Potlach*, the FM's family invests a lot of money even in the present circumstances. But, as I shall show in Chapter 6, this dinner is not the only big expenditure of a FM.

Other necessities for the festive role, such as the costumes, demand a high expenditure. The costumes, which are very varied in quality and price, show social differences (and internal hierarchies). Other social inequalities are seen when a complete family is involved. Given the high cost per family, one will have to sell many lottery tickets; another will not. When asked about social inequalities, one of the fathers whose family sells lottery tickets, said: "Apparently there are no inequalities, but when you see someone who has money and in the middle of a meeting says that he does not have to sell lottery tickets to survive, then you understand that there are differences".

The predominant discourse, however, tends to deny the existence of basic social inequalities in the Association. The Fallas researched, in fact, do not display big differences between their members because they are both in lower middle class and

working class neighbourhoods. But these Fallers are able to see big differences between their Falla and other richer ones⁴. They make a distinction between two classes of Fallas. First, there are rich Fallas and Fallas in the special category. Second, there are modest Fallas to which they say they belong. Their comparisons also demonstrate rivalry, something that is habitual between Fallas (see below).

According to my friends in 'modest' Fallas, the rich Fallas are for members who, as individuals, are "rich people". The Fallas in the 'special category' however are slightly different because they are not exactly characterised by having a richer membership. It is the organisation of the Fallas that matters. Special Fallas are more capital intensive and their management and objectives are different from those of the 'modest' Fallas. My informants reject this form of organisation for three reasons. First, ordinary open Fallas are more lively, offering a better communal experience. Second, ordinary Fallas express equality among the membership: "Special Fallas have events which are only open to people who 'fit'". They are not elitist, but are "for the Fallers, and they are developed by the Fallers". Thus the festive experience is not sequestered by alien agencies: "Special Fallas relegate the Fallers to a second rank" and so there "the Festivity is not for the Fallers". Finally, ordinary Fallas make money by common activities and are not sponsored. However, the opposite is the case in the special Fallas. As a member said, "it is not the economic power of members but their different way of understanding the role of sponsorship and subventions."

Fallas consider that their participative democracy makes a substantial contribution towards the well-being of Valencian society. In this sense they compare their generous contribution to the City of Valencia with the profit that hotels, shops and transport companies make during the Festival days. This leads to a deep feeling of

injustice. They compare the activity of the 'Fallera family', the all-embracing network of Fallas and the benefits that others obtain thanks to their festive work: "the Festivity is operated by workers". The General Secretary of the Fallas Central Committee, the administrative head, said to me that "Fallas see nothing from the money that others make thanks to them, and this has to be analysed. Can you imagine what would happen if Fallas went on strike?"

4. RIVALRY AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN FALLAS

Anthropology has provided us with many illustrations of the way in which parts of a tribe sustain rivalries and solidarity at the same time. The old brotherhood competitions (*justas*) and mutual help to make celebrations, typical of tribal life⁵, interestingly reappear in the Fallas in present-day circumstances. A Falla also has to define its boundaries, at least territorial, with one or several Fallas in the neighbourhood or locality. Rivalry and solidarity occur both at the formal and the informal levels. Children equally reproduce the adults' sense of simultaneous rivalry and solidarity.

Rivalry exists formally in competitions. The organisational structure assumes and makes use of them. The most important competition concerns the monument. It is very important for some Fallas to beat the others in the neighbourhood or locality: "There is rivalry between Fallas, and there are prizes and rivalry. You try to go for the first prize if it's possible, but it is a question of money". Rivalry may be accentuated by social class. So, when a predominantly working class Falla beats a 'middle class' or 'rich people's' Falla, it causes great delight. A senior Faller said:

“In this locality there are three, the one at the top of the village and the one close to the Petrol Station. We have always had good relationships with this one [Petrol Station], but with the other... it is not that we have a bad relation because of the Falla itself but because there is resentment because it is the rich people’s Falla. They’ve got more money and are more vain and pretentious about things they shouldn’t be”

But during the year the monument does not exist, and judgements are made on the quality of social life: “You compete with the other Fallas to see what is the best monument. However the monument is not what really matters, but the good atmosphere that exists”. Many other competitions, organised by the FCC or by the LC, are developed during the year, so that Fallas are constantly competing with each other. These competitions include every activity of the festive life of the Falla. One result of this competitiveness is that the Casal (and houses of members) is full of trophies, cups and awards. They are a visible testimony to the history of the Falla. Trophies may be put close to the altar of the Virgin in the Casal, with special lighting, as if the Falla offers up its playful dedication to competition.

There is also rivalry between the Falla’s associations to get a good time and place for the celebration of Saint Joseph’s day in the Church. The Falla Ecuador was not happy with the Church’s decision and so decided to make an independent religious celebration in the open air, just in front of the Casal: “Rivalry occurs in the celebration of Saint Joseph. There are conflicts of the type of ‘I have got a bad place’, and so the other Fallas go to the Church, but we decided to organise a *Misa de Campaña*”

At the more general level of organisation these rivalries make it difficult to develop common activities that would benefit a group of Fallas, or the whole movement. According to several presidents, many propositions to share resources, activities or to buy in bulk together have failed due to mutual distrust or rivalry. One of them said that the Festivity seems to be limited in the present moment as a result of this excessive tendency towards divisions and rivalry.

Rivalry also occurs outside competitions. For example, a leading member of Dr. Valls said “In this Falla we are the most festive people of any Falla in the town”. Bands also compete for compliments from their listeners. The director of a band explains the reasons to perform well during the *Ofrena* “The second day there is rivalry with the other bands, and you say ‘I want to be better than the band of the other Fallas. It is logical that when people hear us they may say ‘this band is better than the other is’”. I have also mentioned such things as the games of ‘bobby-knocking’ at the doors of rival Fallers.

Solidarity, formally and informally, also coexists with rivalry in a curious manner. Fallas collaborate to help each other during their main celebrations. This means sometimes ‘borrowing’ a team from another Falla in the neighbourhood or locality for an activity that they perform very well; later this ‘loan’ will be repaid by providing other help to this Association. In the Presentation, teams from other Fallas may help out with theatre or folk dancing. It is also a custom to receive visits from other Fallas’ Presidents and FMs who wear their costumes and offer flowers to the new Falla’s FM. Commissions exchange these courtesies as something natural in the ‘Fallera family’: “ There is a lot of collaboration. For example in the question of

regional dances you can invite a group from a Falla in your area, and in return it is understood you will do something later for them.”

There is a peculiar ethos or shared experience of a confraternity, the so-called ‘Fallera family’. It makes it easy to get involved in the social life of any other Falla if you already are a member of a Falla. There is a peculiar kind of complicity that a member compared with what happens within the army or a *coto*. In fact, it is a rule between Fallers to welcome people from other Fallas: ‘people who come from other Fallas are welcome.’

Conclusion

In this Chapter I have shown that the principle of equality and brotherhood is enacted by the Fallers in a context dominated by the central activities of festive sociability. This principle is at the centre of a tension between unity and diversity. On the one hand, there is a movement towards unity, which involves the inclusion of differences as part of the common festive project. On the other, there is a tendency to set up boundaries.

As I shall show in the next chapter, unity progresses as the festive days get nearer, and is characterised by more ‘consumption’ than ‘collection’. However, the inclusive rhythm towards unity enjoys a different degree of success each year and varies in each association. It depends on the Fallers’ opportunities, ability and desire to ‘play festive sociability’ during the festive cycle, as well as on the actual ‘results’ of the play. The role of organisation, particularly that of the main figures, the President and the FM, will determine the balance between unity and differences. It

would be misleading to assume *a priori* that either unity or differences would prevail, for the fact is that the Festivity is an ongoing, changeable construction.⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ “Whoever has created/ An abiding friendship,/ Or has won/ A true and loving wife,/ All who can call at least one should theirs/Join in our song of praise;/ But any who cannot must creep tearfully/ Away from our circle” (Schiller’s Ode to Joy, 3rd. strophe)

² In Valencia the Guilds still survive in a transformed manner. They are still responsible for the training of many of the present-day more experienced Falla artists. Also they parade in the Corpus Christi procession in the artistic carriages called *Roques*, which are still used for old drama representations.

³ Olson 1965.

⁴ For an objective account of class in relation with the wide network of Fallas see Ariño 1992: 107

⁵ Caillois 1950: 89

⁶ The common tendency to restrict Festivity and the sacred to rituals which are understood either as the origin of unity (Parsons, Habermas) or of difference (post-structuralism), instrumentalism (Adorno and Horkheimer) and exclusion (Foucault), misses the point of the cyclical all-year-long effective, variable, non-predictable construction of the Festivity through sociability.

CHAPTER VI

ORGANISATION

The first part of this Chapter shows that the organisation of the Fallas depends on festive sociability. It relies on sociability's agents, activities and rhythm, in the context of the transmission of a festive tradition. The rhythm of sociability, reflected in the Casal, is linked to the rhythm of nature but also has two different organisational phases: (a) a long period of collection and (b) the Festival time of heavy and quick consumption. In the second part of the Chapter I look at the functioning of the Falla as a modern voluntary association which has a democratic and community orientation. Also I discuss the key figures in the organisation, namely, the President (and his Committee) and the Fallera Major (Festival Queen). They are essential if the Festivity is to be held together and if the shared project is to be successful. Finally, I show that the high-level co-ordinating agencies do not have the same power to unite the Falla's world. The balance between unity and diversity changes over time, but also depends on the agents who manage the festivity.

1. THE FESTIVE CYCLES: MEMORY AND SOCIABILITY AS PRE-CONDITIONS OF ORGANISATION

The memory of tradition and its sociability are necessary conditions of organisation. Time-space and family transformations are linked to the changing rhythm of sociability. They are reflected in the Casal and in the type of organisation which is needed. On the other hand, the Falla's organisation incorporates modern features

which are necessary if the community is to develop an interaction with contemporary experiences and institutions.

HISTORICAL RHYTHM

The history of each Falla is essentially oral, a conversational affair. It constitutes a common deposit of experiences which the Fallers constantly use to consider the present experience of others or to confront new challenges, to assess one or another aspect of the current state of affairs and take decisions or to guide the attention to shared points of reference in a moment of difficulty. The collective memory of festive sociability is therefore a pre-condition of any form of present-day co-ordination and organisation. Good examples of this are shared meals, work or the brass band.

These examples, reveal another characteristic of the Falla's sense of history: its cyclical rhythm. The Director of the brass band for instance always referred to the improvements made by the band after having assessed the experience of the past, making the transition from a limited military band to one which has a wide, lively, contemporary and popular repertoire and is able to make connections with the music of other folk traditions. He also explained how the main decisions were taken after having checked the mistakes of the previous years, frequently in the atmosphere of humorous incidents that occurred during rehearsals. The musicians, like Fallers in general, refer to time on these occasions in terms of the Faller Year, or "Ejercicio Fallero". However, they never mention the 'numbers' of the year, but refer to an activity in relationship with the persons who ran it or transformed it. Other big events shape the memory of the community, such as moving to a new Casal, refurbishing it or winning a major prize for their monument, theatre or play-back.

However, as I have said before with reference to making fancy dress by drawing on shared knowledge and memory, the general manner of referring to a particular year, for the purpose of recalling an activity, is by mentioning the name of that Year's Fallera Major. She symbolically represents and 'unites' the whole stock of experience of a festive cycle.

The participants have other ways of differentiating longer units of time as well. On these occasions, as I showed in the section on seniority, they refer to continuity across generations of people as a heritage which supposes a future engagement in the tradition. A particular generation may have given a peculiar mood or character to the association. On these occasions it is common to refer to the President at the time and his organising committee, especially if the president has been re-elected for several years. This emphasis on President and Committees increases for the two basic 'moments' that the participants differentiate in the history of their Falla: the moment of foundation and the time of consolidation¹.

1. The foundation of the Commission of the Falla is undertaken by a small group of friendly families with extended ties with other groups of friends in the neighbourhood. The reasons, identified *a posteriori* by the actors, include lack of social relationships in the recently created neighbourhoods, which is connected to the development of rapid urban building programmes. Some of the founders come from the area, having some previous experience with other religious festivities in the locality. A large proportion of members, more than half, are newcomers who come from other regions of Spain. The Falla provides them with a centre flexible enough to help them socialise and perhaps reorganise and stabilise their identity. Some of the characteristics of this founding period are:

- a) The use of experiences from other local festivities, basically the religious ones existing in the area (Godella).
- b) Little knowledge of economics and administration, compensated by an enormous enthusiasm that makes the founders work at any task that could mean saving or making money for the Falla (Godella). This usually includes the experience of having the monument built by the Commission itself instead of contracting a professional artist (Godella and Ecuador).
- c) A clear dependence on the standard 'instructions' and 'forms' provided by the FCC, the centralising and co-ordinating agency, with the result that a degree of uniformity develops in matters such as the design of costumes.

2. The period of consolidation is related to an improvement in accountancy and organisation. The association also develops a variety of particular activities such as theatre, play-back and dance which help to develop sociability, thereby giving a 'personality' to the Falla. In the Fallas studied, the period of consolidation follows a strong economic crisis. The difference *vis-à-vis* unsuccessful Fallas which disappeared in the same period seems to be the existence of a group of families and friends able to maintain personal trust over accountancy, while redefining many activities of the Falla. However, in other Fallas, such as in the Falla 'El Cudol', there has been a 'sociability crisis' that the participants connect with the interference of political disputes about Valencian identity which were specially crude during the Democratic Transition. This crisis was solved in the case of 'El Cudol' by means of the appeals of the leading people to what a member called "the old friendships rooted in the neighbourhood". In any case, Fallas overcome a crisis if a leading group is

strong enough to promote and reinforce sociable values in the context of a shared project.

Each Falla is 'unique' for its participants. As a participant said in a group discussion: "each Falla is different from others and has its own personality". Fallers associate this 'personality' with the particularities of the Falla's history in its neighbourhood. They are also 'realist' about the festive community. Far from thinking that they are 'idealising' or 'imagining' a community, they specify the concrete things which characterise it and in which they are involved. This 'personality' depends for them on "the sort of activities which are developed and the people who promote them", on the "new ideas which have successfully materialised but also on failures to implement other ideas". Fallers are reluctant to move from one Falla to another. Many participants stay in the same association despite a change of residence. The Fallas in the old centre of Valencia, for example, are mainly composed of families who have moved to new areas but still want to keep their ties with their old neighbourhood through the life of the Falla.

I have shown that the Falla's memory is essentially active and conversational. However, two other mechanisms help to transmit its history. One is the Falla's *llibret*, which is the annual booklet. It contains the festive programme, the list of Committee and honorary members, satirical explanations of the monument, poetry for the Falleras Majors and local advertising. Of course, the participants know the sequence of activities without the help of the *llibret*, which is basically a guide for the general public. More important for them, as I shall detail below, are the objects in the Casal with which members constantly deal, but particularly those which decorate the walls and have a symbolic meaning.

THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF FESTIVE SOCIABILITY

(i) Time of preparation and festive time

Sociability, resources and organisation constitute the necessary conditions for the Festivity. Fallas vary in the ways they co-ordinate these factors. This has implications for the rhythm of development of the Festivity, affecting its progression towards Festival time. But, in general, it is clear for the participants that when a Falla has a more intense social life it finds it easier to solve economic and administrative problems. On the other hand, good organisation makes it possible to generate more resources to organise activities during the year, and so promotes sociability. In this matter, the contrast between Godella and Ecuador proved to be very revealing. The better organisation in Ecuador and the significance of its key figures in the festive network kept the Festivity going all year, with no problems of generating resources. In Godella, however, there is a 'break' of sociability during the late Spring and Summer period corresponding with the Falla's organisational delay in electing the Fallera Major. In this sense, as I shall detail below, the knowledge of the President and the emotional and charismatic function of the FM are fundamental for keeping alive inter-group bonds and for motivating the members to solve economic and other problems.

Fallas have a calendar which starts and ends on the 19th of March, the Feast of Saint Joseph. This period is clearly divided for the participants into two parts. The time of preparation and collection is usually referred to as "during the year" and is always contrasted to the 'days of Fallas', the Festival time, characterised by 'consumption' or 'expenditure'². The transition between these periods includes the

central ceremony of the Presentation, which normally takes place in the month of February.

Festive sociability has different rhythms, but its intensity increases with the coming of Spring. After a period of relative weakness of social ties and few meetings, the rhythm is increased when Fallers start to prepare the Presentation ceremony. This ceremony has a huge impact on the collectivity, which steps up the frequency of its meetings until the Festival time. Finally, a transformation of the agents and the central activities of festive sociability during the Festival breaks the temporal and spatial linkages to the 'normal' routines during the rest of the year. A rich, festive community life with its own understanding of space-time relations takes their place. This is composed of a complex mixture of frequent community meetings, intense informal encounters and the other formal festive events

(ii) "During the year"

The rhythm of festive sociability is interestingly linked to the rhythm of nature. I shall divide this period of preparation into four parts corresponding to Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring.

The Festivity undergoes its first period of renewal in its organisation just after the 19th of March. This is distinctive of the Falla's organisation. It is annual and self-destructive, consuming itself once it has completed the cycle of preparation and 'consumption'. It is the last thing to be consumed before being renewed again. The Festival is symbolically destroyed in the monument's flames. The president and the organising committee, according to the tradition, are obliged to resign just after the burning of the monument. Then a new President is elected who sets out new plans,

reviewing the previous mistakes. In an interview, two senior Fallers (one of them an expert in fireworks and bonfires) said:

“We have had big, medium and small monuments. But it is the same as if you would plant a pine tree and burn it. It is a renewal, a total renewal/.../ This night, we have all died (exactly!, exactly!). We don’t exist as a Commission, we have totally disappeared. The President resigns as President (All the FC resigns). Only one official, a Committee member, provides continuity [to organise the new election]. There is renewal in everything, it is general, I think.”

The transition from the previous rich festive atmosphere is not too violent³. A week later there is the parade of the *Apuntà* [the registration of new members], which is followed by a meal cooked in the streets. The celebration of Easter keeps the festive atmosphere going in the Casal to some extent but it marks the real end of the Festival’s euphoria.

After this, festive life changes: there is a difficult Summer period, between late Spring and September. The new Fallera Major has not still been elected. Some people delay payments or do not contribute properly to the organisation of the lottery. This may cause, as in the case in Godella, a lot of problems in making regular monthly payments to the artist and maintaining the Casal. During this period the most shameful thing for a President is to have to say to the artist that he has to delay his monthly payment, as happened in Godella. So it depends on the result of the previous year’s financial management whether or not there are monetary problems in the Summer months. In Godella, a robbery in the Casal made things worse. During the

Summer only very committed people come to the Casal, and meetings or dinners tend to be attended by very few members, or even suspended.

The decisive period for the renewal of sociability and the resumption of collecting resources is Autumn. Organisational meetings in fact deal basically with questions of money during this time. There is uncertainty about resources but the influence and constant presence of the recently elected new Fallera Major are felt. Her symbolic and emotional power, in collaboration with the President's and the Committee's, start to 'glue' sub-groups together by renewing enthusiasm for the festive project. This influence will be felt even more in the Winter period. The money collected in the main lottery of Christmas, which sometimes causes many delays in the payment of the lottery itself, normally demands the emergency solution of holding raffles to obtain 'fresh money'. Fallas collect more entries from the regular subscriptions of members from October onwards. The double Christmas pay and the post-dated collection of the benefits of the lottery of Christmas and Epiphany, are decisive in stabilising the economy of the Falla.

The third period starts at Christmas and New Year and continues until the Presentation. It is a period of consolidation of the economy. As an accountant said: "people start to regularise payments in October because in January we've got to buy things for the Presentation such as flowers and so on". We can say that this period is a sort of positive 'storm' which takes the form of a sharp acceleration of the rhythm of festive sociability. There is a lot of social life between the 14th of December and the 6th of January. Fallers organise the *Llibret* and start to plan the main events of the Festival programme. The Presentation deserves particular attention in the context of the whole Fiesta. The Presentation is also a favourite time for everyone, but

particularly, as participants said, for the Falleras, headed by the Fallera Major who is going to be 'presented' to the public, and for children and young people, because it is the key moment for their public 'play-back' (karaoke) performance. Organisational meetings are much more lively, even funny, during this period and shift their emphasis towards planning the Presentation and the Festival's programme of events.

The Presentation is the challenge that accelerates the rhythm of festive sociability. It is also an initial test to measure the capacity for work, dedication and mobilisation of the collective if the rest of the programme is to be accomplished. If a Presentation is considered 'good', the Commission is tremendously empowered for the following month. It is also an important moment from a symbolic point of view: the 'retiring' FM passes her symbols to her successor. It is the first moment in which the full membership of the association comes together in a public ceremony.

But the rhythm is going to be much stronger during the weeks leading up to the Festival. The early Valencian Spring makes things easier. Neighbours spend more time in the streets, and children constantly set off fireworks in the Falla's territory and neighbourhood. This period is full of meetings which help to strengthen the collectivity and create an even higher sense of collaboration and unity of the community based on the festive project. Most 'Fallers of four days' start to collaborate at this time.

(iii) "During the Festival"

The Falla's organisation has worked during the year towards the collection of resources for sociability. Now, a practical form of community organisation adjusts to festive sociability to oversee the massive expenditure of the resources collected over a

year in a very short time: the Festival Week. Formal organisational meetings are suspended, and the community relies on its shared, festive experience and knowledge. The Committee however has previously agreed all the formal terms of the festive programme with the Council by means of the Local Co-ordinating Committee. These arrangements include a variety of matters. There are civic rituals organised by the Council, such as the Exaltation. The Council also provides permits and helps to set up and set fire to the monument, with the help of the fire brigade; and the police close the streets to traffic, diverting it through other non-festive areas. In all these cases the Organising Committee is the main instrument of negotiation and dialogue between the tradition and the framework of contemporary life and institutions.

Several transformations in festive sociability occur during this week. I shall concentrate here on those central ones connected to the family and time-space. The final week changes the previous rhythm of family life. An eruption of chaos seems to disrupt the normal binding patterns of routines. One's pace of movements and timetable change. For example, the time for sleeping and eating changes: "Everything changes during these days: sleeping, eating, all". Family roles also transform in a process that could be separated into two moments. First there is a push towards individualisation and personal independence. A couple from the Falla Ecuador joked about it in an interview: " We don't see each other, and women have *bula* [permission] for everything /.../ Children never appear in the house, they forget that they have got parents". Equally a Faller of Godella satirised his relationship with his wife: " When I go up for the *bocadillo*, she goes down". The second stage is one of re-aggregation in the effervescent and highly demanding festive community, with a new reordering of nuclear family life into the wider context of the community association.

It resembles the structure of a clan, but at least it is a renewal of elements of the ancient extended family and community in the present-day. For example, the control of children is assumed by the whole collectivity. As I wrote in Chapter 4, the functions of mother and father (uncle, etc.) are assumed by adult men, women and good friends of parents (like uncles). Also, the adults' delegation of another part of this authority to the President, FM and the Falla's community norms, makes it less necessary for them to play the serious adult role, thereby freeing them up for joking and 'adventures' which I explained in the previous sections on 'play' and 'humour'.

Festive sociability adds new rules to festive play and becomes 'movement' which displays the Festivity, expands its scope and marks its time and territory. It does so through such things as the use of fireworks, the movement of the body in costume or fancy dress in the frequent parades and other joyful, crowded open-air celebrations in the festive territory and the neighbourhood. These characteristics of festive sociability are connected to a peculiar transformation of time and space, into a malleable and playful 'substance'. This playful and high-spirited sociability takes over the modern understanding of time-space and subordinates it to tradition. For example, the time-table of formal parades is agreed with the local police; and the modern clock may be used to meet, normally one hour before. But the festive 'time to start' will be determined by the time that it takes to gather people together. This is announced with fireworks.

In Fallas the rhythm and timing of the activities and celebrations are established with the help of fireworks. The time to wake in the morning is indicated with a special fireworks parade through the neighbourhood, the *Desperta* [the Awakening]. The main celebrations are preceded by the noise of three separate

explosions of *carcassa* [big fireworks such as rockets]. The heart of the day and night are enlivened by fireworks. The rhythm of the progression towards the festive period is matched by the increasing frequency of children's fireworks explosions. Even the end of the Festival is marked by fireworks which set fire to the monument. This does not mean that clocks are not used, but they are only a medium for negotiating with the public and the authorities the general rules governing the festive programme.

The same happens with space. As I shall show in Chapter 7, parades are fundamental for marking time and space. But comensalism, open air celebrations and the noise of fireworks in the festive territory also establish the enlarged space of the Festivity. The territorial limits of the Festivity include the surrounding streets or the whole neighbourhood of the locality. The Falla, it is worth emphasising, has a Council permit and the help of the police who provide the necessary signals and surveillance for securing the isolated festive area and diverting the traffic. The Casal is extended into the street or square with the help of a big awning; community meals are cooked in the streets; popular music is played on the square; and children's parties are celebrated in the open air. It is no exaggeration to say that the Fallas' communities take control over the streets of these modern cities and localities in order to re-elaborate a community-oriented festive tradition.

The participants consider it quite natural to take over the space and they feel that this 'community appropriated' territory is theirs. A general understanding on the part of neighbours and authorities helps to make this collective appropriation possible. There are, however, as I showed in the previous Chapter, some objections and difficulties from the neighbourhood itself. They fundamentally concern problems

of noise and traffic, which are a consequence of the Falla's periodic 'containment'/(relative confrontation) of some features of the modern way of life⁴.

But not only these conflicts remind the Fallers that this territory is not totally theirs. Last year the meal of the *Apuntà* , celebrated just one week after the Festival, could not be cooked on the streets because the Committee forgot to seek permission from the Council. Perhaps still thinking that the street was theirs they were surprised by the police, who prevented them from cooking *paellas* in the public streets. Thus, the two enormous *paellas* had to be cooked, of course in the traditional way, on a wood fire, on the very small terrace on the roof of the Casal!

These characteristics of the festive period of expenditure have one thing in common. They are an exercise of 'dialogue' between the festive tradition and the contemporary experience of family, time-space and institutional life which, on the one hand, is taken for granted by the participants when submerged in the festive flow of successive and overlapping activities. But on the other hand, it is also managed and negotiated when necessary with the relevant contemporary institutions by the Falla's Organisation, its Management Committee and key authority figures.

CASAL

The Casal is predominantly a place for members to meet. It is the heart of the life of the association: "It is the centre of everything in the Fallas /.../ a centre for meeting, preparing activities, organising things". It is a place with big emotional associations for members and is also linked for some with bonds of a quasi-family quality. It is the scene of key emotional events for members, such the election of a Fallera Major or those special meals which make the collectivity feel more united. For many, the Casal

is a second home which includes the extension of it into the street during the Festival, sometimes compared to the terrace of a house. This delimited 'territory' is used for open air activities during the Festival, facilitating the control of children. Fallas usually choose a central place in the neighbourhood for the Casal. In addition, a wide street or square is necessary for the monument and the open air activities. A mother, ex-Fallera Major, describes it as "like another home, because I am with people with whom I am happy. It is like another house of mine /.../ it is not my street but it is as if it were my street, yes, yes."

The Casal includes a big hall for community activities, a bar-kitchen, an office and storage space. The Casal also has a special place for their main symbols and sacred figures, which normally include a small altar for the Virgin. The walls are heavily decorated with commemorative photographs, pictures and other awards and prizes.

Festive sociability shapes the key organisational decisions of the Casal. An obvious example is provided by the organisation of the Falla's bar and the big central hall of activities. Comensalism (always related to conversation) is so important that the area of the internal bar, with standing place, the *barra*, could be considered the centre of the life of the Casal. As the axial point of sociability it is the site for every crossing of the collective paths of food, drink and conversation. Thus to a large extent the functioning of the bar will tell you how well the Falla is functioning. If the bar works well the Falla is generally more united; and there are fewer potential conflicts. Festive actors are fully aware of the key role of the bar. As a treasurer told me: "If the bar does not work well, all the Falla has a commotion, and there are conflicts". Discussions about the bar concern, of course, money. On certain occasions, such as in

Ecuador, Fallas may have decided to contract out the bar as a solution, but this, according the treasurer, has created new problems. Members' comments about the incompatibility between a Falla and a business took, according to him, a typical form: "This is not to make a profit, this is a Casal and not a bar". Fallers also criticise other Fallas that contract out the bar: "They are contracting out the bar: they are already operating like a business". The experience of Ecuador, according to the treasurer, is that when the bar was contracted out, people complained about prices, quantities and qualities of food and drink, conflicts that highlighted the incompatibility of Falla and business.

The area of the bar, particularly the standing place, has the highest density of social interaction, and is the centre of the Casal's life and circulation of people. This reveals the importance of comensalim and the social activities, and movements, associated with it. This standing place of the bar is the meeting point between the Casal's two main flows of 'traffic', going from the small bar's kitchen and its cooking place to the centre of the hall. It is the place for distributing food and drinks. It is also the right place to have an aperitif and chat about many things that cannot be openly discussed during the meal. This type of conversation normally covers a wide range of topics but is especially concerned with local news and things about the Falla. It is sometimes called '*la comidilla*'. This word is a peculiar diminutive from '*comida*', 'meal'; it means the news and gossip which everybody knows and discusses in small gatherings. As was the case with the connection between comensalism and talk, 'rice' and 'conversation' at the table, the standing place for the aperitif is the right one for this other 'alimentary canal' of the festive body and spirit. Anyone who

has not been in *la comidilla* will have difficulty in following the current life of the Festivity.

The importance of the bar's standing place is higher during the year than during the Festival. During the year people usually sit close to the *barra*, so that they can keep contact with the people who are up in the *barra*. The interconnections of food, drinks and fluxes of talk and eye contacts, go from the *barra* to the people at the tables nearby. The people only look towards the door when someone arrives. Things change during the festive period, however. The frequent outdoor activities tend to shift the flow of 'traffic' towards the centre of the hall and the area outside the main door. This increases when meals are prepared outside, and the meal is in the open air. As the tables are outside, the threshold becomes a mediating point between the Casal and the exterior. The door is then always open, and its surrounding area is crowded. The Casal's open door symbolises the general expansion and movement of the Falla into the streets and the locality during the festive period.

A big hall is indispensable for a Falla's intense community life. Activities are so varied that the furniture needs to serve several purposes. It has to be small and easily transportable, for example folding chairs. The big hall is a multi-purpose community room, designed to suit festive sociability. According to the nature of the activity, the space of the hall changes, almost like stage scenes. For example, two long tables, one for youngsters and the other for adults can be arranged for eating. For dancing, the tables are placed against the walls and some chairs are organised in circle. For general assemblies two or three tables are kept for the President and Secretary, while a circle is constructed with other tables and chairs.

The office is the place for administration and economics. In a normal Falla it is usually very small in comparison with the other spaces of the Casal. It contains the Falla's records of membership and the books. It also has a small library, including the Falla's *Llibrets*, and in some cases, a computer (Ecuador)⁵.

The office has a very low level of social interaction. Monetary transactions are first of all a social event in the Falla. People go to talk when they go to solve administrative and economic questions. The personal relationship comes first; money or details of administration are subordinated. The office may be the place to go when an event is finished and it is necessary to write something, to count money or give change. The monetary transaction is subsumed into a higher relationship. This means that you cannot go to the Casal, pay the lottery and immediately go rushing away. People talk about several things, staying for a while. There is an expectation of a full personal event to which the activity of the micro-economic exchange is somehow added. This is the hidden reason why payments are not normally made through the bank: going to deal with small administrative or economic matters is a personalised routine that helps to sustain daily festive sociability.

In Godella, there is a curious phenomenon which definitely attests to the underlying sociable dimension of the economic and administrative exchanges. The people responsible for the lottery and subscriptions set up a stall in the centre of the main hall, so they can keep working and having '*comidilla*' with those who play or stand in the Bar. The people who came to pay stay a long time, frequently eating peanuts or drinking at the same 'organisational table'. However, the office loses almost all its importance during the festive period because the bulk of administrative work has finished.

Casals have many stores. Ecuador for instance has three: a first one for things in frequent use (paellas, kitchens objects, etc.), a second one for things in use during the festive period (decorations for the Presentations, etc.), and a third one for fireworks. Finally, as I shall show in the following Chapter, the Casal is also a central symbol for each Falla, for it contains the main symbols of the community in special spaces and on its decorated walls. Examples of these are the photographs of the successive annual Fallera Majors, Presidents and monuments, which keep the history of the Falla constantly fresh in members' minds.

The gender structure of roles in the Casal follows the habitual nuclear family patterns. Cooking and cleaning are predominantly women's activity, while men organise the long tables, put the chairs out, and so on. In the big meals a few men cook the paella or a big barbecue. But the work of women on these occasions is fundamental to the preparation of the ingredients and the distribution of food and cleaning. Middle aged and adult women normally undertake these tasks because they are free from ties to young children and, typically, they have long experience of the Falla. Married women with babies or young children work considerably less. Men normally take for granted this differentiation of roles but can also make it explicit by stressing their recognition of the relevance of the work done by women. A President said: "Everybody collaborates, but especially women. Women are the *anima* of the Falla. If there were no women there would be no Fallas."

Mature women also have an important role in maintaining the community of the Falla because of their involvement in neighbourhood affairs. Their conversation often turns around family, children, their schools, education and health. They are practitioners of economics at its foundational level, since 'economics' has its root in

'oikos', the household. Housekeepers are managers and daily decision makers and they apply this skill in their contribution to the Falla. Typical conversations in the Casal concern how much license should be given to teenagers and how things had changed since their own youth. Both debates represent, in microcosm, the interplay between past and present culture which is typical of the festive tradition.

Among younger people, the division of labour is different; the gender roles are less pronounced. In the Younger People's Assembly, it is common for young women to hold administrative offices, at least in the Godella and Ecuador Fallas. This is undoubtedly the product of their secondary or tertiary education. Women are also progressing into powerful administrative positions in the mainstream of Falla organisation. It is common for an ex-FM to occupy a key office, such as Secretary or Treasurer; this has also occurred in Godella and Ecuador.

In the group interviews women complain that a group of them always do the cleaning. They do not clearly contrast themselves to men but they also mean that other women do not collaborate so much: "we are always the same women" is the common expression. However, young women also emphasise, when talking about the older ones, that "it is something that spontaneously comes to them because they have been doing it all their lives". Some women also defend their traditional position when other women or men try to question it. My personal experience as participant may be summarised by saying that Fallas make the gendered division of work in the Casal so visible because they reflect the existing society. They show these differences more clearly, not because they have more 'machismo' than society itself, but because of pressure from the community spirit to offer whatever knowledge and skills they have to the collectivity.

The Casal, as centre of festive sociability, embodies the history of the Falla for members. It also reflects the changing rhythm and characteristics of festive sociability, of its agents and of space and time, during the year as well as during the Festival. Its communal multi-purpose space and the organisational decisions which concern its structure depend on sociability as well. Its central spaces are community-oriented, but contemporary economics and administration help to make it flexible enough to adjust to a variety of activities and collective transformations.

2. THE FALLA' S ORGANISATION

There is a stereotype concerning organisation that is deeply rooted in the self-image that Valencians have about themselves. It can be summarised with a combination of two Valencian expressions: 'pensat-i-fet' and 'me'n-hi-en-fot'. They mean a 'quickness about thinking-and-doing' and 'don't worry about anything too much'. These expressions are frequently heard in the participants' discourse, always establishing a comparison with the assumed excellent organisational capacities of other people, such as the Germans or Catalans. However, the organisational framework of the Commissions of Falla proves that this stereotype does not correspond to the present social reality, at least as far as the ability and desire of the Fallers to organise their Festivals and keep them alive is concerned. Time-honoured wisdom about festivity is preserved and reproduced by the participants themselves and is enriched by the inclusion of a modern organisational framework which is subordinated to festive sociability as an operational side of the Festivity. Also, Fallas constitute a widely extended associative network with a distinctive form of co-ordination.

(i) The Falla as modern association: administration and the democratic committee and assembly

Fallas function like any other modern voluntary association. They have democratic procedures to elect and make decisions, based on rational administration and economics. This organisational framework is facilitated by festive sociability and has to be understood in this context.

The Falla's association has a general assembly and a general committee. The assembly is composed of the registered members and acts as a sort of sovereign 'festive parliament'. The committee is selected by the democratically elected President, who is chosen annually by the assembly. The committee consists of the usual officers in any other voluntary association: Vice-president, treasurer, secretary, etc. Like other associations which attend to their particular issues, Fallas also have specific posts for the people responsible for looking after the lottery, festive activities, children and young people. Again, like many other associations, Fallas have co-ordinating agencies. They are only different from other modern associations in one respect: they annually elect a Fallera Major, who shares the leading position in the Festivity with the President.

Fallas use today's rational standards of economics and administration. I concentrate here on administration with the example of the Godella Falla's Secretary, a 23 year old ex-Fallera Major with a degree in English literature. The Falla's organisation combines a detailed process with a margin for new ideas:

"I personally have my work as the Secretary very organised. It has to be very well organised at the level of doing the accountancy, record keeping,

and it has a specific format because there is a meeting which must approve these things. But there are also parts which are free for suggestions and new activities which grow without organising them”

She observes the standards of modern bureaucracy and administration. There is constant minute-taking during the assemblies, and books of transactions are produced to be publicly checked by members. Another important job of the Secretary is communicating with the Co-ordinating agencies:

“My work has great responsibility. The census depends on me; it contains all the data about the Fallers, address, identity card numbers, age /.../. You have to write all the letters, requests for permits [to the Council] and awards from the FCC [co-ordinating agency], which I am doing right now. You see, I have to collect data about the number of years of membership and so on.”

All the Fallas that I researched and visited have a similar system which, according to members, has been used since the origin of the Falla. It is important to add that this includes Francoism and the period of democratic transition⁶ : “Here we have always been doing that. We have records and minutes going back to 1974, and they have the same form.”

Social festive situations are however at the root of administrative and economic decisions. The rational scheme of organisation is the result of thousands of micro-conversations conducted informally between members over many years. Members may question the relevance of specific parts of the programme in relation to their cost. Any change implies modifications in other parts of the programme. However, the real debates about economics take place informally, and negotiation between members happens during daily, spontaneous encounters, dinners or card

games. They are normally conducted with a sense of humour, so that, for example, a negotiation between someone who wants more money for dinners and another who wants more fireworks may be solved through occasional joke competitions. Such was the case in Ecuador in relationship with a decision to put more money into fireworks or into comensalism. The negotiation took a whole Summer of joking and card games, between the two sections headed by the representatives of the 'pyromaniacs' and the 'gluttons'.

The definitive decisions by the Assembly or the committee follow a similar pattern. On the one hand, there are long debates about issues in the assemblies when the issue has not been well worked through in the informal channels of the association. For these key decisions, the history and common experience of the association is taken into account. Therefore, as I said above, organisation relies on the members' shared experience. I also mentioned before the long and heated debate about accountancy, involving an appeal to the Falla's principles of brotherhood in the Falla Av. Burjassot-J. Ballester. These heated debates are decided by votes: "You propose an idea, and the pros and cons are seen. If the majority agrees except one or two a vote is not necessary; but if there are many discrepancies, a vote is taken". Even so, the organisational debates are permeated by a festive atmosphere which makes them last a long time. Topics change spontaneously, and people want to enjoy being there. According to the Secretary "the general assemblies are *un follon* [a crazy disorder], and so we have to refer many topics to the Committee meetings". This is not much help however because the habitual atmosphere of the Committee meetings is actually sociable. However, criticism develops, decisions are made and votes are

taken in an atmosphere that defies the understanding of time as a useful and efficient instrument.

Power is retained by the Committee, which tends to be composed of people who go to the Casal frequently and participate more. By contrast, the people who do not go much during the year have less power, less legitimacy when speaking and also less information. In any case both the rulers and the ruled agree about the fact that one group has power over others, and that this group is composed of members of the Committee. However, as I explained before, many experienced Committee members would deny legitimacy to the type of fellow Committee members who do not work enough and just like the pretentious activity of '*figurar*' or 'showing off'.

(ii) Economics

The link between money and the rhythm of sociability over the festive year was analysed above. This section is concerned with the basic instruments and activities that the associations use for organising their economics and for collecting and spending their money.

There are two parallel conceptions or underlying philosophies in Fallas regarding economics. The participants always make a distinction between them. They are respectively represented by 'special' and 'normal' Fallas. The first type need a lot of money because they devote a great deal of attention to the monument in order to win a prize. They are run on entrepreneurial lines with a rational, modern administration, with information technology, offices, and sometimes even paid staff to run specific tasks such as lotteries and subscriptions. They have a network of sponsors, whose businesses they advertise. They also work with banks, through whom

they can sell lottery tickets to supporters living abroad. The number of Fallas that may be included in this 'special' category is very limited, and they do not represent what is commonly considered to be the most common type of 'normal' Falla.

The common Falla relies on a mixture of traditional domestic economics, using the background experience of the family for collecting money and the basic features of modern accountancy and economics to make annual budgets and accounts. Collecting money takes place in an inter-personal dimension as part of a wider social encounter, and there is distrust about 'distancing' the transactions. However the budget, the balance and records are kept in conformity with current standards of modern accountancy.

An example of this is the lottery. The 'clients' tend to be local neighbours or friends and relatives, who may trust each other "even if they haven't been able to collect the lottery tickets before the draw". As a lottery officer said: "They have a list of clients and they know that for every draw they've got that relation, in spite of both seeing each other or necessarily dealing with money at a particular moment. They know that the Falla has got them as fixed clients. It is a relation."

Trust is placed in members who are responsible for this onerous, unpaid work: "you don't get paid, but give your time with generosity". The comparison with the family is clear: "It is like the economy of a household, with the difference that here you are dealing with the money of many people and in your house you are dealing with yours."

The economic planning for the year, the budget and balance, are rationally managed but at the same time they take into account the specificity of the Festivity. This demands a deep understanding of the Commission's need to control risk. Fallas

differ from other businesses or festivities in so far as it is not possible to be totally precise about the exact amount of money that will be in the account in order to be able to run the scheduled activities. Many factors affect the rhythm of revenue collection and the amount of money in at a particular moment. They may change from one year to another: there is variation in the number of members, the timing of their payment, the intensity of sociability, the success in selling lottery tickets or raffles, the quantity of 'Honorary Fallers' recruited and so on. Consequently, there is risk in the annual festive project because many agreements are made at the beginning, and certain circumstances, such as the payment to the artist, or some events such as the Presentation, require a certain quantity of money at a precise moment. The knowledge of the Fiesta and the understanding of the present situation of the association, and of its history and social potential, are fundamental to knowing what sort of risks may be assumed at a specified date, so that a realistic budget and a correct balance may be obtained. This rational accountancy, subject to festive risk, may be undertaken with different degrees of sophistication.

The break-down of Fallas' budgets is very similar in 'normal' associations. Of course, the main expenses are concentrated in the Festive period. All of them are 'ephemeral' in this respect. In Ecuador for instance they are: Festive acts (17%), monuments (17%), fireworks (13-14%), music (7%), and flowers (6%). The money spent during the year is less than 13% of the total and is for the rent of the Casal, its bills, cleaning and repairs. This economic pattern fits with the previous consideration of the year-long period of collection and the festive time of heavy consumption.

The two main sources of money are the monthly subscriptions and the lottery. Here, the collection of money does not obey a regular rhythm because members may

delay payments, particularly during the first part of the Falla year. Benefits from the lottery are the main part of the revenue of a 'special Falla' and very important for a normal Falla as a supplement to monthly subscriptions. The law allows the Falla to keep 20% of the proceeds from each lottery that it runs. This benefit may accumulate during the year. Fallers may decide not to sell lottery tickets, but then have to pay for the corresponding benefits themselves. The people who go to the Casal frequently tend to rely on selling lottery tickets, whereas some of the people who do not go very often may prefer to avoid selling so many lottery tickets.

The 'normal' Falla also differs from the 'special Falla' in so far as the organisation of the lottery is not understood 'as an enterprise'. It helps families to pay their monthly contribution. It also helps the Falla because, according to the law, people who do not collect their prizes after a certain date lose rights, and so the Falla is allowed to keep the unclaimed prize money.

Other non-compulsory activities to make money exist. The most important of them is raffles. There are usually two or three during the year. Some Fallas regard selling raffle tickets as an obligation for members, but others do not. They may amount to between 8% and 10% of the budget. They also rely, like the lottery, on a social network of people, basically family and friends, who feel close to the Falla. Other sources of income are not important in quantitative terms but are revealing of some characteristics of the Festivity. The smaller quantities of money coming from the *arreplegà* [the collecting parade], advertisers, Honorary Fallers, *llibret*, tickets for the Presentation and the activity of the Bar of the Casal show that the Festivity has a wide social network and that it is a centre of the social life of the neighbourhood.

In any case, the importance of these activities in quantitative terms is much smaller than that represented by subscriptions or lottery tickets. They are also produced thanks to a big effort by members who go out to ask for money from people personally, in the shops, or in the parade of the *arreplegà* or in the fancy dress cavalcade. Last year's Falleras, disguised as *zingaras*, were collecting money from the public in exchange for dancing.

The greatest part of the money is spent at the end, 'burned' during the festive period, in analogy with a *potlach*. The quantity spent on events that are completely public, and may be also shared by the neighbourhood or the locality, is more than 50% of the budget. Neighbourhood economic contributions are much lower. This suggests that Fallers are right when they say that they are really offering things to the neighbourhood. One way to interpret it, following the schema of the *potlach* or the sacrifice of donation, is that through this offer of an 'excess' to society members obtain a public and local confirmation of their social identity. This could be particularly important for the high proportion of recent newcomers who are looking for a status and inclusion in the community.

This is however only one issue in the whole of the Fiesta. A general effect on the economy is produced by the Fallas. Their total declared budgets amount to more than 10,000 millions of pesetas. This quantity does not include costumes, jewellery, etc. Also, it does not include many other 'invisible' or 'submerged' expenditures or any valuation of the Fallers' own work. This money affects the City's economy through tourism and transport. The City devotes a paltry 150 millions of pesetas to organising the Fallas⁷. Members know about the importance of their work, but do not see a response from the authorities and institutions in the shape of helping, supporting

and promoting their efforts to keep the Festival going. As a participant said in this context: “The Festival is done by the workers.”

(iii) Key figures: President and Fallera Major

President

Presidents say that their position is difficult because they have a lot of responsibility and sometimes criticism. They insist that the most difficult problem is the delay of payments by members. Presidents represent the administration and organisation, and sometimes have to fight for improvements. They always compare this treatment with the positive attention that the Fallera Major receives, insisting that they have got to play the role of the ‘baddie’ or ‘monster’, while the Fallera Major is the ‘Goddess’. A President said:

“The President is more like the opposite [of the Fallera Major]. People know you but they go more to catch you. Well, it also depends on who the President is, but people have a tendency to criticise you. The Fallera Major however is like the Falla’s goddess, and we all go to worship the goddess, from the President down to the whole neighbourhood. The President is the administrator, and the administrator has to control things. This is the difference.”

The President and the General Committee imprint the association with their character. It is not exclusively a formal matter of rules or statutes, but a matter of personality and conception of the Festivity. Presidents may have more or less respectability, aura and sense of participation, but the dynamic of the spontaneously stable and overlapping

groups also generates a sense of relative autonomy for common members in relationship with power. A President said:

“The Falla is somehow autonomous. But there is a character, a line, which depends on the character of the people who have the power. In this sense the Falla is like a photograph of the people who direct it. The Falla has the character, more or less fixed, more or less joyful, of the people who at each moment manage the Falla.”

Ordinary members express a similar idea to this President. In a group discussion in Ecuador members concluded that the Falla’s sub-groups have autonomy but that the President’s character had a big impact on motivation and unity. The participants insisted that there were “presidents who motivate more than others, getting people to do more things”, “presidents more engaged than others”, “more democratic and participative”. According to members, all this had repercussions on the Falla because, as one of them said, “everything is interconnected and in the last analysis this is what makes the Falla vibrant or not”. They also valued the charismatic qualities of the president and his ability to delegate things to the Committee in order to get things done in the Falla:

“I think that the President’s motivation and charisma, first with the Committee and later on with the Falla, is essential. Communication goes upwards from the grass roots, and downwards as well. If a President is democratic this works; but if the President becomes a ‘donkey’ dictator.../.../ One of the qualities that a President has to have is to know how to delegate, starting with a wise choice of Committee members. For example, economics and *festejos* [parties, comensalism, open air

celebrations] are fundamental. If the President has the charisma to choose the right people for these two streams of the Falla, everything will be lively. Otherwise, things will go down.”

Fallera Major

The people, the President and the FMs themselves consider the FM as the person who represents the Falla. As a FM said: “you represent your Falla”. They say it is like being in a dream or fantasy in which they are the protagonist, like a princess in storytelling. As a current FM said, it is the dream which each Fallera would like to make true: “It is a dream. Look, I was the Children’s Fallera Major ten years ago, but since I finished I wanted to be the proper Fallera Major. I think that if I had not got it, something would have been missing in my life.”

The Fallera Major is democratically elected by the Assembly and her term of office lasts one year, which they remember as “my year”. The Fallera Major has a peculiar relationship with her Falla’s fire monument. At the end they feel very sad when “their monument” is burnt. As a President said: “When the monument burns they know that their reign is finished”. The FM is the person who sets off the fireworks which will finally set fire to the monument. She then consumes a big part of her symbolic power at once, and normally cries and shows other signs of melancholy. Again every FM agrees: their dream is just broken by the burning of the monument. The monument of their year will suddenly disappear, leaving a gap:

“I did not want to cry because I am not a person who cries. I was containing myself, containing myself, but finally I couldn’t avoid crying. It is my Falla. Well it isn’t only mine, it’s of all of us, but it is

the one of my year. It is not only mine but it seems like it. You are very sad because you know that when this monument disappears your reign is going to finish too.”

However, when a new FM is elected, normally after the Summer, the old one still has the role of guiding and ‘mothering’ the newly elected ‘Persephone’ until the Presentation day. Then, when the Spring Festival is near, the ‘old’ FM transmits her attributes to the ‘young’, constituting the new symbol of the Falla’s unity.

The FM has a special ‘persona’ which the President does not have. Everybody pays more attention to the FM; she is better recognised in the neighbourhood. The FM receives different treatment, and ceases to be a daughter or a wife: just the FM. This distinction (and status) is ‘naturalised’, taken for granted, among members, the neighbourhood and public. An important part of it lies in her special costumes which have to be more beautiful (and expensive) than the others. The main secret of a FM is her costume. Its characteristics are not unveiled till a week before her Presentation. The costume is then displayed in her house. The FM has to enhance her appearance above the others, and she knows that everybody looks at her as the leading protagonist. She has to perform a peculiar form of sociable coquetry⁸, particularly important in relationship with body movements in parades when she is accompanied by the President. In the Falla’s jargon this is known as *lucirse*, a word which comes from *luz*, ‘light’. It turns the aura and brightness of the Queen into a star. The parade, led by the President and the FM, provides the best platform for this couple’s charisma. As a FM put it: “you know that everybody looks at you. It is not exactly that you’ve got to be better than the other Falleras, but you’ve got to go a bit over them../ You also spend more money on the costume.”

The emphasis on coquetry as *lucirse* in the parade contrasts with the solemnity and rigour required for the formalities of other ceremonies. FM's acknowledge that they are much more inhibited in these formal events. The FM's also say that you have to have social poise because "you are introduced to many new people and celebrities when you represent your Falla". These necessary sociable graces are always stressed by them to prove that it is not just a matter of "being a beautiful girl". In fact, what a Committee seeks in a FM is that she should have many links in the Falla and the neighbourhood. The FM, according to a senior treasurer, is for instance the figure who can help money raising by attracting a high number of "Honorary Fallers", who are a sort of occasional 'part-time members' who pay less and have fewer rights, consuming little. Thus, a lot of the power of the Falla in the neighbourhood to attract people depends on the FM's family and friendship links.

Finally I must try to characterise the mysterious relationship between the President and the FM in relationship to gender and organisation⁹. The 'persona' of the FM is transferred to the couple, President and FM, who then occupy a special place in the Festivity. A President said: "I am not the same person when I am lonely as President as when I go with the FM. It is something else /.../ I am not able to define it". He also added that the same people who have been criticising him acclaim him when he is accompanied by the FM. Finally, he ventured an explanation of dreaming, storytelling and fantastic films, in which the FM was the fairy godmother. He compared it to a mysterious cloud of emotions which circulates in the festive atmosphere. However, this is not the place to search for the anthropological origins of this couple. It is perhaps a contemporary re-elaboration of the 'fertility couple'. What matters here is that the naturalised relevance of the couple has implications for

organisation. The number of women who are presidents is very low, usually between 7 and 11 each year in Valencia. When one is elected she needs a 'male' substitute to accomplish the public functions of the 'couple'. This is the first year that a boy is intending to be FM in one Falla, something that has created a great debate in the associations.

(iv) Co-ordinating agencies and party politics

There are two types of co-ordinating agencies: committees and assemblies. The main central committee at the City level is the *Junta Central Fallera*, The Fallas Central Committee (FCC). In the neighbourhoods and localities there are affiliated committees: the Local Committees and Demarcation Committees. Other corresponding assemblies also exist at these levels. The most important is the Assembly of Presidents, which organises the Faller Congress. As we are going to see, Fallas are far from accomplishing their ideal of brotherhood at the co-ordinating level. The main agency, the FCC, does not have enough legitimacy and receives a lot of spontaneous and organised criticism.

The Faller statutes define the FCC as a 'Local Autonomous Organism' according to the Local Law of 1955 (section [b] and [c] of Art. 85). This legal framework allows the Council to assign responsibility for managing and co-ordinating events to the FCC for the celebrations and other activities that occur in the Falles (I-II-Art.4). The Council agrees to provide the FCC with public funding for its tasks¹⁰. However, on the other hand, the regulations say that the Commissions themselves must delegate the management and co-ordinating functions to the FCC (I-II-Art 5.2). This double 'delegation' evidently underlies the basic problem of the FCC, as a

unstable bridge between the forces of local administration (and politics) and the more basic and spontaneous festive sociability of the Associations.

A second difficulty for the FCC is connected with the previous one. Its President and General Secretary are not elected by the Fallers but by the leading political party in the City Council of Valencia. The three basic positions of the FCC are interconnected by design: The Mayor or Mayoress, democratically elected, appoints the real Executive President, who is an elected politician on the Council. The General Secretary is also appointed by the President. This means that those having power have not been democratically elected by the Fallas. Moreover, appointment to positions in the Directive also depends on the President and the General Secretary, who normally work in conjunction. There are two types of members, the elected and the directly appointed¹¹. As the President may directly appoint 20%, the more powerful areas of the Directive may be occupied by non-democratically elected people. If we add to this the assessors, who are also appointed by the President, and currently work in the Delegations, we obtain a basic leading group of people politically faithful to the commands of the FCC. I interviewed both very old and young members of the FCC. They invariably stressed that the Directives of the FCC change a lot in relation to the leading political party. The General Secretary himself explained these norms and mechanism of the election to me:

‘Fallas are divided by sectors in the City: there are 26 sectors corresponding to the same number of districts of the City. Sectors become aggregations of Fallas, and each sector has three delegates who are renewed one per year. So there are 78 elected members plus the 16 directly appointed ones, corresponding to the 20% freely chosen by the President, and this makes a

total of 94 members. Independently of this there are other assessors for the different delegations of the FCC'

As a consequence of this, the FCC has difficulties in stabilising and legitimating its position. Political influences and a non-fully democratic structure are detected by ordinary members who, however, acknowledge the need for a co-ordinating agency. Many members disagree about several aspects of the present functioning of this co-ordinating agency. Their key criticism is that the FCC does not correspond with the spirit of each Falla in which the President is democratically elected each year. Many Fallers think that the FCC is authoritarian. A politically moderate, wealthy President, not suspicious of any form of radicalism at all, explained the need for co-ordination that, in turn, makes the FCC necessary. But at the same time he criticised its lack of renewal and democratic procedures:

'It is like everything where there is power: to keep it is the most important thing for a group of people. I think the FCC is necessary and I like the idea, but I don't want an archaic one as we have now. It has to be renewable, just like Fallas are. Each year new people should get in, but not only those on the periphery, the demarcation delegates who do not have any power, but the "General Captain" [an ironic jibe at the office of General Secretary]. He should be a person elected by all of us.'

It is fair to say that the members of the FCC do not not receive any payment for their work, which is very heavy in some cases. The structure of working personnel of the FCC does not cost the Council any money, except for the two secretaries who are employed full time. This highly motivated 'festive-rational-apparatus' organises 100,000 thousand Fallers in the 372 Fallas in the City, plus the members of many

other new Fallas dispersed over the Local Committees in the Country and abroad (Fallas of Buenos Aires, Paris, Barcelona, Zaragoza, etc.).

These local and other sectoral committees have evolved two sorts of alternative organisations, which still have no well defined structure. First, several sectors of Valencia City have developed a co-ordinating agency called '*Inter-agrupaciones*'. Second, many Fallas from distant localities and cities, which are now more numerous than the associations of Valencia City, are trying to create a new agency. However, these two groups are not united. Their main point of division is their assessment of the capacity of the City of Valencia to bring together the Fallas of the Region. Their point in common is the rejection of the CFC rule over the democratism of the GCs. This is why the present situation is divided.

The General Assembly, or Assembly of Falla's Presidents, is like a parliament which should control the activity of the FCC. It consists of all the Fallas' Presidents. It is headed by the President of the FCC and moderated by the General Secretary, who is assisted by three members of the Directive. There are 9 ordinary assemblies per year, plus other extraordinary ones. In the ordinary assemblies the FCC presents a dossier in which the "agreements adopted by the FCC are justified to the Assembly" (II-III- Art. 24).

The General Assembly calls the 'Faller Congress', which is considered to be the highest 'legislative organism' of the Fallas, and the place where the overall framework of the 'Faller Statutes and Regulations' is discussed. However, according to many members, it seems that the Congress is habitually unable to face relevant issues, and keeps sending back (in an amplified echo) the previous opinions of the FCC, as it did in the Francoist past.

The Congress approves the general regulations for the Fallas. Its concerns include the Falla's functions, authorisation of new Fallas by the FCC, and the structure and aspects of its organisation. The organisational regulations are the most numerous. They deal with: the legal status of the Falla, the office of the President and FM, children and young people, awards, prizes, relationships with artists and their 'Guild of Fallas' Artists', questions of risk and security, costumes and the particular events of the general festive programme (organised by the FCC, Demarcation Committees or LC). The participants' general opinion about these regulations is that activities have to be co-ordinated, particularly during the Festival, but that the rules are sometimes restrictive, constituting a strait jacket for the associations¹².

The several agencies that direct the Fallas are not then able to create a united and collaborative 'movement'. The existence of these agencies was cited by a President as the clearest proof that the Myth of Brotherhood does not work in the Fallas' wider world. He considered that divisiveness was a consequence of "groups of power, jealousy and selfishness". This was considered to be a real pity because Fallas could be a very powerful social movement: "What a great social movement the Fallas could be if people only agreed. I am not talking of politics or wrong things, but only being Fallers, only for the fact of what Fallas are. It would have an enormous force."

But it is perhaps this force which many local politicians fear. Fallas in general are therefore not so much united overall as united in each local Falla. One of the reasons certainly is that the key general representative figures, basically the President and the General Secretary of the FCC, are not elected in the same way as their counterparts in local Fallas. Of course, there are other reasons, one of them involving,

as I have shown before, class divisions. Another reason is party politics and its uneasy co-existence with the politics and democracy of festive sociability.

Internal divisions may be caused by party politics. However, the most common opinion of Fallers presents an image of an autonomous, harmonic community, which is dominated by festive sociability. This view may be summarized as follows: there are different tendencies and affiliations, but apparently they coexist and cannot disturb the festivity, if the Falla is autonomous from politics. Again, comensalism is chosen as the example: any discussion is said to reach a happy conclusion by eating together. A Faller, who considered himself a socialist, told me about his relationship with a member of a regionalist conservative party: “You know Enric, he is from UV. When we discuss, even argue about politics, afterwards in five minutes we sit together at the table, and as friendly as we’ve always been”. Some others see politically guided Fallers as unsociable, very closed and narrow-minded people: “They have their own ideas that they want to impose on you”. The values of the politics of sociability are clearly in the background of this widespread view.

However, there is a long-running problem associated with the politics of identity. It constitutes a sort of *taboo* for the Fallers because it was the centre of recent crude internal conflicts during the Democratic Transition: the question about the link between Valencia and Catalonia. In general, the Left was sympathetic towards links with Catalonia, while the Right was opposed to them, pushing for a particular political framework for the Valencian Region¹³. A Leftist intellectual Faller explained that this conflict was very strong and that it was only solved by appealing to values of old friendships and love for the Fallas as a Festival for itself. There were implications of party politics in the Fallas, and the Festival became an arena of political manipulation

and fighting during the Transition towards Democracy. Now some political parties, as a strategy for political mobilization on the Right (PP, UV), are trying to revive this conflict. In Valencia, they have managed to organise in defence of the 'Valencian language', against Catalan. Fallas have been compromised with this strategy at their general organizational level. The Assembly of Presidents of Falla has got itself involved. This could be the source of new discrepancies and dissent in the Fallas researched (Godella and Ecuador). The sources of this political mobilization, however, come from the top of the organization of the Fallas (FCC, Assembly of Presidents, etc). Thus, independently of the idealized image, and good intention of the participants, party politics penetrates into the Festivity and may create internal conflicts.

The Festival is therefore the territory where two ways of understanding politics co-exist. Festive sociability tends to resist the interference of party politics with the help of its peculiar democratism. However it cannot avoid that interference altogether; and it can be very marked in some periods, particularly when the composition of the Festival Co-ordinating agencies is strongly influenced by some parties. In general, and in the long term, however, the predominant view of the participants has been closer to the 'truth': somehow sociability predominates in the Festival. As an example, I shall repeat what I said in the Introduction about the 'mirage' of Castells's neighbourhood associations in Spain during the Democratic Transition, and the '*disenchantment*' which followed. Fallas, however, resisted party politics and multiplied during the period. The mirages and *disenchantments* of the 'serious' political public sphere and the strictly cognitive understanding of civil society are also familiar to Habermas.

CONCLUSIONS

In this Chapter I have shown that the changes of festive sociability, during the year and during the Festival week, have an organisational counterpart that changes with them. This operational side of the Festivity combines a communal collection of funds with rational economics and administration. Also, organisation is fundamental for the dialogue between tradition and contemporary experience. The Casal, the heart of the association, reflects the characteristics of this festive movement and organisation. The Falla as a modern organisation accommodates modern accountancy and administration against a background of festive sociability. The key officials and the General Committee are essential for activating and uniting the collectivity under a shared project. However, this pattern of a progressive overlap of groups and initiatives in the Falla's festive sociability is not matched by the situation at the general co-ordinating level of the Festivity, where the balance between division and brotherhood is elusive. In the next Chapter I shall analyse to what extent the Fallas' symbols and social ideals are universal enough to bring about their ideal of brotherhood.

ENDNOTES

¹ As I wrote in Chapter 2, my participant research was mainly concerned with two young Fallas in new working class neighbourhoods. They are 21 and 25 years old. However other older Fallas were visited and their members interviewed, including people who had belonged to unsuccessful Fallas which had disappeared when these two flourished in the same area.

² This does not mean that during the year there is no festive time or that the days of the Festival totally lack dedication, particularly in the case of Fallers who are fully involved in the Festivity. The perception of festive time varies with the degree of participation in the Festivity. The contrast (and the transition) is more abrupt for the 'Fallers of four days'. On the other hand, the permanent sociability of the Casal embraces celebrations during the whole year, such as Christmas, Epiphany and Easter as well as the recent importation of Halloween. Anniversary days, birthdays, excursions and the 'Sunday *paella*' are other examples.

³ The feeling of discontinuity is partly overcome by the speed with which the organisation is renewed. As a treasurer said: "For us it is not as if the Festivity finishes. After the burning we go all together to the Casal, the President resigns, the Committee resigns, and we immediately elect a new president"

⁴ Fallas are highly reflexive. Their views on the consequences of the Festival for the organisation of the City are revealing. For example, one of the most widespread topics in the monuments concerns the interaction between the Festival and modern urbanism at the level of traffic problems which are caricatured in the monuments sometimes in very funny ways. A Valencian family of fat Fallers may be depicted eating sausages or *paella* while encircled by vast numbers of cars fighting to get into the surrounding, blocked square. However, if a modern City retains this tradition, which causes this sort of periodic 'controlled disorder' it is because the Festivity is at least meaningful at the level of identity and certainly, according to members, beneficial as a tourist attraction.

⁵ In a 'special category' Falla the space for the office, or offices, may be much bigger because of the way administration and money are dealt with. It also contains computers, fax, and other components of a modern efficient rational office.

⁶ As I wrote before, according to Antonio Ariño's historical data, the origins of this generalised formal structure as well as the Fallas' democratic procedures in the context of a voluntary association date from the late 19th century. Democracy in the Fallas was achieved so much earlier than in Spain as a whole.

⁷ As an example, Ecuador, which has a budget of more than 8,000,000 ptas, received only 40,000 ptas from the Council (to organise theatre).

⁸ Simmel explains coquetry as a sociable quality (1971: 134)

⁹ Children also have a President and a FM. Their role is not organisational, but a sort of entertainment for children. It is important to stress, however, that the Children's FM is a highly sought after role, while Fallas may have problems finding a boy who wants to be the Children's President. This importance of the female for the symbolic roles matches their higher number in the Festivity. In the General Committee the proportion of men and women is quite balanced in the Fallas that I researched. The proportion of women on the Committee is higher than in many other organisations. In Ecuador's committee, for instance, there are 13 men and 10 women.

¹⁰ The budget of the FCC is about 198 millions of pesetas. The main sources are the Council, 150 millions, and sponsoring 'private entities', 28 millions. The FCC spends 55 millions on its own bureaucratic functions, 60 millions on the 'celebrations' of the general programme and 36 millions on Valencian FMs. Interestingly, although it is a bureaucratic organisation, its main expenditure is on the sociable events at the general level of the Festival in the City. Its members are unpaid Fallers.

¹¹ Art. 14 and 15 of the regulations deal with these mechanisms.

¹² A clear example of this occurred in Godella. The Falla had five titles for girls to accompany the FM: the Muses of flowers, poetry, sympathy, music and fire. The FCC prohibited the use of these titles in order to protect the importance of the FM. This caused a great deal of concern in the Falla. The Secretary said: “We had to eliminate the Muses, it was a regulation which came from outside, and we have had that all our life”

¹³ I do not have the space to summarise this complex issue here. It involves several areas of research: identity, nationalism, politics and language, which cannot be attended to in the framework of this thesis. There is no overall study of this issue, but the main authorities are: Fuster (1962), Ninyoles (1972), Lluch (1976), Cucó (1977), Mira (1985), Mollà (1988).

CHAPTER VII

SYMBOLS AND TRANSCENDENCE

The distinctiveness of the Fallas' 'festive ideal' may be clarified by means of an analysis of their underlying foundation of festive sociability. In this Chapter I shall show that the Festivity's symbolic universe is characterised by an openness to the wholeness and fullness of life (and death), which is a general characteristic of European popular Festivals (Bakhtin). The core symbols of the Fallas are ephemeral and transitory since they concern time, nature, the body and art. The basic symbolism of Fallas reflects this emphasis on fully appreciating life through the praxis of the ephemeral. This is a way to seek transcendence which is totally opposed to any form of asceticism. Consequently, Fallas, have an ambiguous relationship with modernity. They incorporate some features of modern life which enrich the framework of the tradition. But they do not 'translate' modernity, at least the standardised 'mainstream modernity'. In fact, Fallas exclude from their festive ideal some elements of modern life. For example, serious and 'proper', 'civilised bourgeois' may have problems coping with uninhibited parades in the streets or with certain aspects of the monuments. The up dating of the tradition has to be read in terms of the tradition itself.

The Chapter starts by considering the general characteristics of the Fallas' symbolic universe. The Festival has a shared set of symbols, but each Falla has some its own special sub-set. There are permanent symbols and others which appear more

frequently during the Festival. For analytical purposes, the Fallas' symbolism may be divided into the four categories which structure the organisation of this Chapter.

1. the particular symbols and emblems of each Falla, such as the Casal itself
2. the symbols of the Festivity which are shared by all the local associations, which are maintained throughout the year and are constantly linked with its permanent sociability. The *paella* is a good example.
3. the symbols which appear during the festive period but are also a general characteristic of the Fallas. These symbols are predominantly ephemeral. Examples include the Falla's fireworks, flowers or the satirical monuments. I shall leave satirical criticism and the monument for the next Chapter but deal with parades, fireworks and flowers in other subsections of this Chapter.
4. the 'festive ideal' includes some institutional 'civic' and 'official' symbols. They take their meaning from the richness of festive sociability and are secondary to it.

1. General characteristics of the Fallas' symbolic universe

The Fallas' symbols are rich in quantity and quality. One aspect of them is the depth of their roots, which go deep into the long history of the tradition. At the same time, Fallas include contemporary 'civic' symbols and 'official' sacred figures in their symbolic body. The main 'sociable symbols', such as *paella*, flowers, fireworks, bonfires can also intersect and subordinate them to the requirements of Falla sociability. This predominance of festive sociability, in addition to the heavy influence of the artistic in its symbolism, means that Fallas are concerned with grasping the wholeness of life. In this case Simmel's claim that sociability and art are

instruments for dealing with the fulness of life is directly applicable to the qualities of the Festival.

Just as the symbols are varied, so the sense of transcendence also takes many forms. It is sometimes expressed by the participants in a general form with the help of metaphors and analogies. Some of them are: “we are the leaves of a tree, its roots revivify every Spring with new energy and later join together”, “it is a dark cloud that becomes clear”, “a mysterious energy that makes you feel different.” In the words of a participant who was expressing her feelings about the collective dancing in a circle after some celebrations, including the *crema*: “We are one with the world, and the world is one with us. Dancing and singing all together we feel close to the earth, air, fire, water”. In these formulations the feeling of the participants is disengaged from a concrete object or sacred figure. It is then a broad way of relating to the others and the world. These global feelings may co-exist, however, in the same person with more specific veneration, for example a devotion to the Virgin, the Falla’s banner, or the Valencian flag.

However, symbols and emotions overlap in the Fallas’ activities, multiplying their power. The main symbolic ‘containers’ are the Casal and street parades, because they occupy a central role in relationship with festive sociability and its changing rhythm. The entire body of the Fallas’ symbolism is concentrated in the Casal, which is the heart and reflection, of its permanent sociability. The participants have a daily relationship with those objects, symbols and sacred figures which take up a significant space in the Casal. Of course, the transformation of the rhythm of festive sociability affects the way in which the symbols are displayed and the changing relationship that Fallers have with those symbolic and sacred objects. During the festive period the

Falla becomes 'movement' and moves out of the Casal by means of the parade and other outside events. Then the Falla displays its symbolic and sacred universe in the streets and squares of the neighbourhood or the City. In this respect, the Falla resembles churches in so far as they have a meeting place, with a distinctive architecture and spatial organisation containing their sacred objects. They also have characteristic forms of display, such as religious processions or pilgrimages.

A second characteristic of the Fallas is that they have a clear identity which actively nurtures the symbolic universe of their 'ideal' in the context of the Festivity. Identity and symbols are continuously recreated and re-interpreted through the activities of festive sociability. As happens with symbols, Fallers speak both in very general and concrete terms about identity. The 'festive spirit' is generally associated with collaboration and offering, which, as I have shown in Chapter 5, feed into harmony, union and conviviality in the community. Most important is engagement in the festive community by helping to build it, 'sociable work', or what Fallers call 'being there'. As I shall show below, this concern with taking care of the Falla by collaborating and offering, which is also at the centre of the democracy of comensalism, is sublimated as 'pure giving' in relationship with flowers, particularly if they are donated to the Virgin. Other 'external' and more 'object-specific' manifestations of identity are less important than this general one. The costumes worn by the Fallers, for example, are considered by many to be a key symbol of identity but as one of them said, "I think that there are things which are much more important than wearing the Faller costume. It is being there fighting each day for your Falla". In any case, as I shall show below in relation to parades, an inner feeling which arises from a

festive engagement with the Falla has to match the bodily movements and gestures with costumes.

Fallers mention a few specific things which encapsulate what it means to be Faller: the cooking and eating of the *paella*, the use of fireworks and the enthusiasm for fireworks displays, as well as participation in table games such as the '*trick*', the monuments and the Valencian language. But the relationship between an activity and a symbol is not usually one to one. Fallers identify themselves as participating in the Falla's main events, which are active 'symbol containers'. The main example here is the Falla's parade, which has a great symbolic meaning in itself, because it is a display of the whole of the Falla's symbolic universe. In this context, the participants frequently mention the parade of the Offering of Flowers to the Virgin. Also, there are symbols like the *bunyol*, a typical Valencian pastry, which symbolises several activities: comensalism, sociable work and seniority.

Again, as happens with the feeling of transcendence, symbols and activities overlap at the level of identity, and therefore increase their power to shape identity and 'legitimate' it when there is harmony between them. The lack of this overlapping harmony in certain cases demonstrates the relevance of a good association with the 'festive spirit' and dedication to particular issues. A clear example of this is the 'Fallers of four days' who are said come and wear the *bunyol* just because they are registered and have the seniority, but not because they really work. There are also members who do not work much but like to play and tell jokes all the time or just prefer to 'pose' vainly (*figurar*).

A third peculiarity of the Fallas is the intensity of the emotions, particularly in relation to bodily expression and movement in parades in gala costumes. Fallers

experience strong feelings which are rooted in their symbolic universe and social identity, both of which depend on the richness of festive sociability. In parades, Fallers cry, or cry and laugh; even collective crying is common. As a participant said, “the same face of joy and happiness” can be seen in everyone who is parading. This emotional and bodily display of the Falla’s symbolism and identity in parades transcends the opposition between body and mind. In this sense I speak of ‘body at a re-move’ as the basic mobilisation of the body in parades which reveals tradition ‘in dialogue’ with modern conditions. In parades the body is the ‘subject’ but also the ‘object’ of this dialogue. As I shall show in the next Chapter, Fallas incorporate the grotesque body, typical of European popular culture, by juxtaposing it with other contemporary presentations of the body. This bodily ‘re-move’ is characterised by an existential and emotional festive mood, which is more fundamental than language or reasoning because it implies a mutual relationship between the community, nature and the symbolic universe¹.

The fourth characteristic of the symbolic *corpus* of the Falla is the sense of the ephemeral, transitory and perishable which is connected with time, nature (and the body) and art. This is the case with music, flowers, fireworks, bonfires and the monument. March is also, as Heidegger (1982: 83) indicated, a time of the transitory and the ephemeral. The burning of the artistic and satirical monument implies a consciousness of the finitude of life and a cyclical sense of time which is linked to renewal. In this sense, the image of the Phoenix is omnipresent.

The Falla’s symbolic universe includes a concern with satirical criticism. From its origins, the Falla has been primarily about criticism. The most powerful image is the cleansing carried out by fire. I partially dealt with this when I discussed humour

(and its *socarro* character) , the Fallas' *comidilla* and the sociable context of decision making in spontaneous gatherings or in the Fallas' assemblies and committee meetings. This emphasis on criticism is connected with the another characteristic of the Fallas' symbolism, namely the persistence of the basic themes of popular European culture and Carnival. Both are present in the fancy dress parades and in the monuments but this also includes myths in conjunction with contemporary images and scenes.

Finally, it must be pointed out that Fallas are more complex than many other forms of Festivity and popular religion in the Mediterranean region which, according to Boissevain (1992:137), are centred on a 'Saint'. Fallas occur exactly in the middle of Lent, a period characterised by the limitations of excess imposed by the Catholic Church. The co-existence between the Fallas' popular heritage and the Church's sacred figures, such as Saint Joseph, has not always been smooth. In this context the recent 'repositioning' of the Virgin as the central figure in the Festival has produced a compromise which I shall explain below.

2. Specific symbols of each Falla

The specific symbols of each local Falla represent a high degree of agreement and unifying power between members. The more important ones are the Casal, the Falla's banner, a copy of which appears on a badge worn by all members, the FM, the monument, the Falla's prizes and awards and a particular image of the Virgin. By contrast, the image of Saint Joseph is not in the Casal.

The Casal itself acts as a powerful symbol and is perhaps second only to the banner in its strength. It constantly occurs in daily conversation. Its repair and

decorations are key moments in the shared memory of the collectivity. When a Falla changes Casal the removal and the job of re-organising and adapting the place to the Falla's requirements are remembered as a sort of new beginning. As the place where the group lives together, it generates a deep emotional attachment. The Casal is so clearly identified with the Falla itself as the territory of the community that people also use the word 'Falla' to refer to the Casal as well. It is important not to forget the participants' feeling of having a second home there. The streets around the Casal are also part of its symbolic power. A participant defined these streets: "as if they were my native soil".² The Casal, as the 'original' home and hearth of the community, contains the rest of the special symbols of each Commission.

The most important identificational symbol of a Falla is its banner. It is the name, emblem and image of the community. In Durkheimian terms I should say that it is the totemic representation, the emblem. It usually carries the names of the Falla's streets or neighbourhood, accompanied by a characteristic picture. The images vary according to the character of each Falla, but the most common motifs are fire and fireworks. As a member said: "It is like the identity card of the Falla. It is my representation". It opens all kinds sort of celebration, parade or procession, and only the Valencian flag is allowed to precede it in some 'civic' ceremonies like the Exaltation. The banner is reproduced in multiple forms in the Falla. The most important are the personal emblems and badges of membership. They constitute a sort of totemic 'individualisation' of the Falla and the spirit represented by the banner. It is on the Falla's costumes, fireworks, handkerchiefs, sashes, cummerbunds, awards and prizes. Moreover, in the competitions between Fallas the banners and their individual representations are fully displayed for the participants and spectators.

The Fallera Major is the main human representative figure in each Falla throughout the year. Each Casal keeps one or two walls decorated with their photographs. The Presidents' photos are less numerous, but are kept in some Fallas such as Ecuador, albeit less prominently displayed than the FM's.

The annual monument is less representative for a Falla than its Casal or the banner, especially when the Commission delegates its design to an artist. In general, as I shall show in the next Chapter, the satirical monument on fire and its figures called *ninots* are the leading images of the Festival events. The symbolic power of the monument increases during the festive period. Then it signals the centre of the Falla's territory, representing the result of the year-long effort to make the Festival possible. It is the key expression of the Falla during the final days, and will appear in magazines and newspapers, accompanying the emblem of the Commission. Photographs of the annual monument are displayed on the walls of the Casal.

The monument gives rise to the greatest rivalries between Commissions which are all the more intense because prizes are so valuable. This reveals another dimension of the monument. The co-ordinating agencies have a good opportunity to make their power felt by laying down rules for their construction, giving prizes to the Commissions and supervising the artists' contractual relation with the Commissions.

Finally, I must emphasise some of the connections between these symbols and sacred figures and entities. The banner and its reproduction on personal badges and sashes are equivalent to the name of the Fallers' 'big family'. The Casal corresponds to the 'house' of the family too. Presidents and FMs, as a couple, are the 'heads' of the community. Therefore the basic symbolism of each commission portrays the characteristics of the traditional Valencian large family.

These symbols of the commission are constantly used and are evident in any sort of celebration but are particularly visible in the manifestations of rivalry and solidarity between commissions. The basic structure of competitions and prizes depends on this basic symbolic scheme of identity. The cups and distinctions won by the community are displayed in each Casal, sometimes close to the sacred figures, such as the Virgin.

Fallas have an image of, or even an special altar for, the Virgin. The image is normally decorated with the Falla's emblem and is therefore made specific to that particular Falla. It plays an important role in the community's relationship with the sacred because the Virgin is one of the sacred things of the Casal as a community home. This constant presence of the Virgin contrasts with the lack of images of Saint Joseph.³ The Virgin shares her prominence, however, with other stronger, earlier and more basic symbols. Photos and pictures of each Casal invariably depict the monument, just before it is burnt, often surrounded by the entire membership and are, as such, definitive images of each Commission's identity. During my research the participants chose this sort of photo to illustrate the cover of the Falla's booklet, the *llibret*. The other image that competes with this one is the photo of the Falla on parade. Parades are a mobile display of each Falla and its symbols and are themselves a powerful symbol of each Commission's self-understanding.

3. General symbols of the Fallas

In this section I deal with the symbols that are general to the festivity and therefore generally understood by the Fallas' membership. I leave other symbolic images to the

next sections, but this division is purely analytical. In practice, as I said before, symbols are interwoven and have complex relationships with the festive.

Two fundamental symbols: the *paella* and the *bunyol* reflect the relevance of comensalism at the level of festive sociability. The *paella* and the *bunyol* are original to, and typical of, the Valencian region. Fallas have used them so intensively in their comensalism that they are also key symbols of the Festivity as a whole. Both types of food appear constantly in photos, posters, and awards. I have already discussed the relevance of the *paella* in the context of the Fallas' comensalism, as a paradigm of the enormous meal in the Valencian way of understanding the banquet in European popular culture, but I did not explain its symbolic capacity to bring people together. The *paella*, as a model of comensalism, works like a circle which brings people to the same level, both in the association and among neighbours and visitors. A Fallera, housewife and mother of three children, summarised the meaning of the *paella* for the participants, as a ring that enriches them and their relationships. The *paella*, cooked on a wood fire in the street, containing traditional local vegetables, which are also a metaphor of sex in the monument, synthesises the Festivity as the dish of a festive communion:

“The *paella* is like the ring that binds you, because it is a hoop, it is a round thing. It is a ring that encircles people, friends and the family. It was common to eat from the same dish [she refers to the still widespread custom in which each group used to eat from the cooking receptacle, also called *paella*], but now we are so many that we cannot do that. But families usually eat from the same dish, from the *paella* itself. The bond tightens more”

The *bunyol* is a traditional pastry in the shape of a ring doughnut which is normally eaten at chocolate parties, children's gatherings or as a snack in the streets during the Fallas days. This pastry is absolutely sovereign in Fallas. It is everywhere, being cooked in fixed and mobile cooking devices, but also in bars and homes. It is eaten at night by groups of friends, particularly after fireworks. But the bunyol is not only a symbol of the Fallas' comensalism; reflecting its 'mobile', sweet and round quality it gives its name (and its picturesque image⁴) to the Festival prizes and to the corresponding emblems on the awards, some of which are personal and others collective. Fallas and members have a tradition of collecting and showing them. *Bunyols* are divided into collective and individual ones. The latter are used to measure seniority and to indicate the stage of a Faller's career. This means that the bunyol is also a symbol of 'sociable work' but it basically serves as an indicator of internal hierarchies and 'merits': there are bunyols of copper, silver, gold, gold with laurel leaves, gold with diamonds and laurel leaves. Thus, the bunyol also has implications for organisation. A huge amount of the bureaucracy of a Commission and particularly of the Fallas Central Committee is dedicated to 'distributing' bunyols. Finally, the personal and collective prizes obtained in competitions are also a link between images and play. In this way they refer back to their original role as sweet rolls to be eaten when the winning players celebrate in a friendly party.

Musical groups in the Valencian Community depend on the number and diversity of religious festivities which generate high levels of sociability in the streets of the villages and neighbourhoods. In Valencia popular religiosity is associated with festivity in the street where sacred images are accompanied by parades and brass bands. This festive sociability has spurred a progressive improvement and in the

organisation of musical activities. This process culminated in the 19th and 20th century with the creation of many voluntary associations of musicians (and their families).

The result of this mutually empowering link between the festivity and music is impressive in the Fallas, for though there are many Fallas, they have no difficulty in finding bands to accompany their parades, or they may create their own musical groups⁵. Also, Fallas have been successful in developing a special musical repertoire which contains musical pieces that are inextricably linked to the Festival and are among its key symbols. On the symbolic power of this music a President said: “ The music of Fallas is clearly identifiable, and very different to the music of other Festivals, like the Moors and Christians [another Valencian Festival with distinctive music]. Even the people who don’t understand much when hearing this music know that Fallas are coming”. An example of this is the ‘Fallero’, a tune which I briefly explained in the section on children in Chapter 4.

‘Valencian’, the name that the Catalan language takes in the Valencian Region, is another essential symbol of the Festival. The commentaries which accompany monuments, the *Llibret* and the speeches of the formal celebrations are always written or delivered in Valencian. This has never changed in the Festival. Indeed, the importance of Valencian for Fallas is so great that they kept using Valencian even during Franco’s Regime when there was a policy of suppressing differences. This also illustrates the power of the Fallas to exert influence and pressure on public life.

But not any form or register of Valencian is right for every event or circumstance in the Fallas. As I argued in Chapter 4, language is predominantly linked

to humour and sociability in the Festivity. Therefore, the written language of the satire used in the monument and the *Llibret* use a lot of jargon and popular expressions. 'Purists' of Valencian (and Catalan) do not feel quite comfortable with this festive neglect of the 'standards', that is Academies' and University's norms⁶.

In the Fallas that I studied at least half of their membership are newcomers to Valencia whose first language is Spanish. Both languages co-exist in the Casal without problems, with a predominance of Spanish in daily conversation. The live conversations that I recorded in the Casals and in *tertulias* show spontaneous shifts from one language to the other. There is a predominant language in a relationship which is based on a habit established between two speakers. But shifts can occur also as a consequence of the type of experience being communicated and the degree of spontaneity and trust implied in a particular relationship. This shows that language is associated with lived experience, as speakers may move from one language to the other in order to find better words for shared experiences.

Valencians also try to integrate newcomers by shifting to Spanish: "You cannot make the integration of these persons more difficult. If you have to speak Castillian, you do it". Joke competitions are a good test of the 'shifting mechanisms' in relation to power because the participants 'play power'. They show that the unifying attitude towards language is the use of it for joy and communication. As a treasurer said: "In the Falla the attitude of using language for communicating predominates, and not as an instrument of power". Actors are highly reflexive too, they may use expressions playfully or characteristic words of the other's person's language to tease and make jokes. Language, as in the monument or in ancient satire, is used to undermine any sort of pretention, as with the pretentious 'big prick'.

4. The Festive Movement on display: the parade as a symbolic re-presentation of the body

Parades are an essential part of Fallas and a distinctive symbol which provide a showcase for other related symbols. As I showed before, the Falla increases the rhythm of its festive sociability during the Festival days and produces a change in the families' space and time . Parades are part of this transformation. They are the clearest display of this 'festive movement' which is based on the body⁷. Parades situate the body in movement and emotions at the centre of a live collective way of sustaining a festive dialogue between tradition and contemporary life. I shall focus on the representational way in which the body is mobilised and portrayed in a manner that could be called 'body at a remove'⁸. The participants move their bodies in rhythm with music and display them in fancy dress or gala amidst a joyful manifestation of emotions that signal of their festive identity and deeply rooted tradition. This process of collective recognition and the making of popular criticisms takes place in interaction with spectators in public.

(i) Bodies on the move

In the past, groups of children and neighbours would parade to collect old furniture and firewood to make a bonfire. Today, parades have increased in number and variety. Two or three occur in each Falla each day of the festival, at regular times: morning, early afternoon, late afternoon and early evening. Several Fallas might parade in the same district.

(a) Dialogue with music and movement

Parades are a type of 'conversation' with the public that is based on music and the collective movement of the bodies in costume or fancy dress. They are the most expressive and self-affirmative way of exhibiting the festive identity and the full display of a community association that preserves a tradition and manifests it to affect the public and invite them to join in. They also constitute a powerful extension of the community association into the street, in the sense of making public the set of rules and transformations that will prevail during the Festival. In other words, they are an advance notice of the festive spirit which will govern the few days of the Festival.

The common elements of parades are music and a special way of presenting and moving the body in gala costume or fancy dress. Each parade incorporates a third element to specify the topics of its conversation with the public: *Desperta* - making a loud noise with fireworks to awaken the neighbourhood; *Arreplegà* - knocking on doors to ask for money and at the same time, giving a token gift; *Repartiment de Banderes* - distributing flags; *Ofrena* - offering flowers to the Virgin; Parade of the *Ninot* - dancing, teasing and joking with spectators whilst conveying social criticism.

(b) Music

Music is associated with events in the collective memory of a group and is therefore basic for the preservation of its pattern of identity in the context of a festive tradition. Sometimes music is associated with words which are easy to remember thanks to music. But music synthesises a whole social world by condensing memories of events and situations. In the case of the Fallas the tradition has particular tunes and ways of playing them that are unique to them. Music occurs in daily life in the Casal and it

signals the beginning and end of the key celebrations, including the *crema* which ends with the singing of the Hymn of Valencia. But its essential role in Fallas is in parades.

Music is the only element that is absolutely necessary for a festive parade.

The rhythm of the music governs the parade, as the participants' steps match the rhythm with a unifying effect, affirming and celebrating their identity as a group. As a senior President said: "a full Falla in a parade without music is nothing; it could even be a funeral. But if there was nobody walking behind the band, people would still look at the parade."

Music guides by 'animating' and stimulating the part of the soul that is shared by all the collectivity. As the director of a brass band put it: "Music makes people move with a rhythm. We try to make people move... Music is fundamental, can you imagine a parade without music?". Music produces unity which guides the parade because participants have the feeling of walking together. Rhythm, and the other aspects of music are adapted to the characteristics of the event, to the route and to the social identity of the group. Their transcendent feelings are more 'visible' when the community association walks or dances together, accompanied by music. The directors of the bands that play in the parades know the power of music to integrate and move people to a feeling of joyful harmony. They also understand the ethos of each parade and the feelings to be expressed at each stage: "In the Ofrena the going is serious, but we have fun on the return". The parade includes gestures and shouts that do not have a definite linguistic structure but are shared and meaningful, overlapping with short jokes, and which are creatively merged with the musical activity and the movement. They also demonstrate the integration of band and group which relies on

an emotional relationship, common trust and shared knowledge that are the basis of the collaboration between members during the parade.

This group activity in combination with music commands attention and wakes up the spectators. But 'questions' and 'answers', if they exist in this awakening generated by music, are not like the mutual expectations of two speakers engaged in rational argument: "Music awakens people and creates attention for something; it activates something in the people who are out watching".

The predominant tunes come from the special musical tradition of the Fallas, but other Valencian folk and popular songs are also in the repertoire. When the band belongs to the Falla, as is the case in Godella, the repeated performance on parades is based on a high degree of shared knowledge between the band and the other participants. In this case the general repertoire may be slightly changed, particularly in the words. Indeed, the extent to which many well known songs are adapted is considerable. By comparison, when a band is hired, the tunes and songs are the conventional ones of the Festivity (Ecuador). In this case the band is a traditional Valencian brass band whose size depends on the economic strength of the Falla.

Fallas have different policies in relationship to creating bands or hiring them. The Falla of Godella has created two bands: a military-type brass band and a folk band. The brass band has about thirty members who are young and middle aged males and children. The Falla set up its own band from its foundation in order to save money. It started as a military band, owing to the general lack of deep knowledge of music⁹. However, it has changed since then and has developed a varied repertoire (which is not of the military type) and some new instruments. The band and the Falla are totally linked in this case. It is not an exaggeration to say that the musicians parade

with their wives, girlfriends, daughters, mothers and some of the other male participants. What is more, the musicians do essential tasks at the level of the Falla's sociability and organisation. In fact, they are perhaps the hardest 'workers' in the association. The folk band is of recent creation and does not yet have an extensive repertoire. It consists of five members who play traditional Valencian instruments. The brass and folk band play alternately on parades, but they are also capable of performing some simple pieces together.

(c) Crowd joys and embodied emotions

Falla parades are not protests or recruiting exercises but are a joyful ¹⁰ and happy exhibition of the festive identity involved in the celebration of a tradition. Strong transcendent personal and shared emotions are experienced on parades. These feelings are sometimes difficult for participants to explain, as a Fallera said: "I can't explain it. It is something that you feel inside, a happiness that you live". In this state, the body is de-sensitised to sore feet, fatigue or headache because of the overwhelming happiness: "You see the Commission, all with the same happy faces. It doesn't matter if you have a headache or you have slept three hours'. Sometimes they are said to be exceptional and mysterious emotions which may even cause individuals or groups to cry. This may happen when the parade approaches a sacred entity such as the Offering of Flowers to the Virgin.

It is worth emphasising that this manifestation of emotions through bodily movements is a collective one and depends on sociability and shared symbols of transcendence. They promote a feeling of unity, belonging and solidarity among the participants that is affirmative of the group: "You feel proud of having a big

Commission that fills the streets and you walk among many people." This is also shared by the musicians, as a director remarks: "I feel the closeness between the band and the Commission. We are very much integrated."

The parade, as an invitational dialogue which deploys a communicative structure broader than rational or linguistic, couples the movement of the body with art and transcendental elements. Music is fundamental but it is not the only influence exerted on the body. Other media, depending on the nature of the parade, have different impacts on the senses, and they transform the internal feeling of the body in movement. For example, parading with fireworks involves noise and rhythm as well as light and smell; it also demands the kind of skill in moving without hurting anyone which is rooted in a shared understanding of risk. Flowers have colour, smell and are delicate to touch; they also have to complement the Fallers' clothes and the rhythm of their steps. However, the two dominant senses in a parade are hearing and sight, corresponding to its two essential elements of music and body in movement. This is why adults guide children on parades, but too many adults can obscure the view; as a Fallera said, "sight is very important on a parade, so children should receive attention, but accompanying adults sometimes hide them from sight'.

The movement of the body intensifies as the degree of interaction with the group and the public increases. It varies according to the type of parade and the stage of its progress. For example, movement is formal and solemn in the first part of the Ofrena but spontaneous and uninhibited during the second phase. The maximum degree of spontaneity and freedom of movement occurs in the fancy dress parade, or the parade of the *ninot*, both of which interestingly are crucial for the delivery of

popular criticism. Criticism, when it is expressed with the body, is not necessarily separated from joy, humour and spontaneity.

(ii) The costumed body

Each parade has imperatives for the way the participants have to present, organise, move, dress or disguise themselves. Parades with costumes may be divided into two types, formal and informal, according to the types of costumes required.

Informal parades deliberately provide for interaction between Fallers and spectators. For example, the *arreplegà*, a parade to collect money, is still mostly a children's activity in which, traditionally, they used to ask for money and old furniture to be burnt in the Falla. Another case is the *despertà* that wakes up the neighbourhood in the morning with fireworks and music. Fallers in informal parades tend to wear a light weight black smock or working outfit called *blusón*. On these occasions they tend to act spontaneously without processing in formations.

Formal parades may be brief and simple, like going to the house of the Fallera Major, the Festival Queen, and accompanying her to the presentation of prizes. By contrast, the Ofrena parade lasts two days and requires each Falla to walk for a whole afternoon or evening. This type of parade has become considerably longer in recent decades because more formal acts have been added to the festive programme. They require precise and detailed organisation and proper, festive costume for the first part. However, they have not lost their spontaneous side and usually have a second act full of spontaneity and relaxation which may include a lot of joking, dancing and singing.

(a) Costumes, identity and recognition.

In the words of a senior Faller:

"People have to be able to recognise the person who has been making sacrifices through the year and goes out to the street to show that he is there and that the public can also participate in the same manner as we do. We wear costume because for us it is our symbol of being Fallers and so you go out around the streets and people know you as such; otherwise people wouldn't know you. It is our way of letting the people know when they see you passing that we, the Fallers, are there."

The real identity of a Faller, his work and sacrifice (simply "being there" in the language of the Fallas) must be reflected in the symbolism of his costume and the way in which he moves physically under the gaze of spectators. The style of self-presentation goes deeper than the costume itself. It is a joyful claim to recognition of festive identity and the community that preserves the tradition, as a member clearly put it: "To be a Faller is to be in a community in which all the effort you make is brief, and it is necessary that the locality should recognise it. If you get this you may consider yourself well paid back." This means that you are not a Faller just because you wear the costume, but you also have really to "feel it inside": "It has to be inborn in you, you have to live it", said a Fallera Major when talking about a previous FM who, according to her, did not feel it inside and so could not express it in her costume: "she was well dressed but absent because she didn't feel it authentically: she represented our Falla only because she was dressed to be our FM, but she did not have the Feast inside her, and everybody noticed it". Thus wearing a costume calls for a

sentiment, a deeply rooted emotion, and this means having a strong link with the Festivity.

The skill of expressing your inner feelings is the sign that one's external appearance is matched to one's effective commitment to the Festivity. Fallers express it by saying that “you’ve got to be Faller with your body and soul [*en cos i anima*]”. One becomes a real and recognised Faller when one moves easily, spontaneously, and is able to perform the right movements of the body in costume during the celebrations and parades. This, as my experience as a Faller showed, only comes with a real commitment to the Falla.

(b) Types of costume

There are two types of costume that participants wear during the Festival. There is a common working costume, or *blusón*, that is worn during the day but is not used for the special events which require the gala costume. The *blusón* is a simple, big traditional black smock, which is accompanied by a neckerchief (with the emblem of the Falla) and by a small hat, normally only worn for fireworks displays. The gala costume, however, is the outfit that really represents the Falla and the symbolism of the festive identity in a concentrated form.

The gala costumes are an urban re-elaboration of the traditional peasant costume, based on designs from several centuries ago. Fallers associate the women's costumes with 'Valencian women' and the earth. Festive identity and nationalism are consequently mixed in the symbolism of the costume.

The gala costume is always in a floral material, as if flowers might grow from the pleats of the garments which resemble furrows ploughed in the earth. Fuster

(1992: 95) adapted the popular expression that refers to them as being like the “shadow of the rose tree” and said that they were like the shadow of the roses, *com a ombres de roses*. He stressed the evocation of a time past when Valencia really had many flowers as a consequence of its agricultural character. However, the women’s costume also incorporates features of modern culture and institutions that are additions to the colourful shadow of the old flowers. The Valencian flag and other more recent symbols appear on the costumes which are now made, following research on traditional clothing, with modern material under new systems of production, so that they can be later sold in the local market. Consequently the costumes reflect the present, local situation of the dialogue between tradition and modernity.

Finally, the body in costume is not only a symbol of a common identity but is also a metaphor of social differences. Hierarchies of power and economic inequality are imprinted on bodies through the costumes. For example, cummerbunds and sashes of different design and colour stress hierarchies, and the quality of the costume usually reflects a family’s existing resources.

5. THE EPHEMERAL AND ART: FIREWORKS, FIRE AND FLOWERS

The most characteristic symbols of the festivity are perishable, transitory, ephemeral, in keeping with the time of March in Spring.¹¹ In this context flowers and fireworks (and fire) are two faces of the same coin. Fireworks have the strongest sexual and lethal connotations in their ephemeral, artistic and rhythmic displays. They make a connection between the art of the community, its ‘fire rhythm’ and the inescapable time of fire itself in the burning of the monuments. Their colours, noise (or music) and smell inundate the ‘festive atmosphere’ day and night, thereby helping to create a

festive climate which harmonises with the distinctive weather and atmosphere of Spring.¹² Flowers encapsulate the same transitoriness at the most abstract and 'sensitive' level. They are a symbol of beauty, but also an example of the 'pure gift'. They represent the Fallers' sense of 'giving' which lies at the core of the 'festive ideal' and identity. As I shall show later, the participants are aware of this connection between the Festival, the ephemeral and its main symbols.

(i) Fireworks and fire

Fireworks are deeply rooted in the Valencian life world, traditions and festivities. They are an essential symbol in the Fallas which differ from other Valencian festivities in one respect: in Fallas fireworks are inseparably linked with fire and the monuments. The importance, quantity and quality of the fireworks as well as the common expertise of the people handling them were invariably mentioned in interviews with all sorts of people. They included locals, Spanish newcomers and other residents or visitors coming from several countries and continents. It seems appropriate, then, that fireworks are the third largest expense of Fallas (13,6 % of total expenditure), only costing less than 'celebrations' and 'monuments' (about 17 % each).

Fireworks are deeply connected to the Faller identity and they are understood in conjunction with fire. As a representation of power, participants compare them with the destructive power of Nature or the use of gunpowder in warfare. A local Faller, who frequently helps the professional handlers in the Falla as a volunteer, said that fire: "...is everything. When I was a child and there were barbecues I was always the one who put wood on the fire. That was very important/.../ In fireworks the Valencian

people ... we are even beasts. Fireworks can be like earthquakes here, bombs, everything". His profession required him to travel a lot, so he kept comparing countries in terms of their fireworks. His conclusion was that only the Chinese were equal, or perhaps in some aspects superior, to the Valencians. A newcomer from *La Mancha*, who declared her passion for Valencian fireworks as a sign of her Fallera identity, contrasted Valencian fireworks with the displays in her homeland. She added that when she has visitors from her village during Fallas "they are a bit afraid of fireworks when they come here". An English resident in Valencia contrasted the Guy Fawkes celebrations with the Valencian displays. When I said to him I had visited Lewes, in Brighton, and that the displays were quite good there, he said: "you must be joking". A Canadian resident described the Valencian people as pyromaniacs!

The fireworks handlers, a profession that in Valencia is highly valued and considered almost artistic, compete world-wide and win prizes in their field¹³. They are used to modern techniques which involve computers and other forms of automatic rhythmic ignition. They constantly research and improve new types of fireworks. They also make imaginative combinations so that fireworks can be displayed at night over the sea (aquatic fireworks) and/or accompanying a musical symphony. Not surprisingly, on the night of the burning of the monuments the whole sky above Valencia is full of fireworks. The night then changes its dark colour to a festive dawn which draws massive crowds of people together, as the poet said¹⁴, to "rage, rage against the dying of the light".

The spectators, adults and children, are able to handle many of the fireworks associated with the Fallas and know their names and characteristics. They are also knowledgeable about changes in fashions and techniques in products, quality, rhythms

and effects of the displays. This knowledge is grounded in the life-world of Fallers. As I have shown, adults consider the streets where children play with fireworks safe; they join in and ‘teach’ them. The best indicator of this culture and of its peculiar sense of risk and security is children’s expertise and the reaction of the public. Children, when they are four or five years old, may start learning with small fireworks, and by the age of six may be participating in the fireworks parades. Any intention to prohibit the use of fireworks by children, or sending the police when they (or adults) set off spontaneous little fires and throw fireworks in the streets, would be immediately dismissed as nonsense by ‘the public’ in Valencia.

These abilities, learnt from childhood, generate a familiarity with the potential risks of fireworks which helps to manage and control them. Adults participate in many varieties of activities with fireworks, including running with them (*‘correr la traca’*). In some of these activities the free, horizontally flying fireworks occupy the place of bulls in the *corrida*. In others, the Fallers, fully protected with resistant clothes and helmets, throw fireworks at each other while other people watch from a distance (*‘corda’*)¹⁵.

Fireworks are a symbol of being Faller and of the Festival in general. For example, among the most typical fireworks, a small one called *masclet* [small *macho*] is used in every aspect of presenting the Fiesta to the public. Figures and caricatures lodged in the scenes of the monuments often take the shape of the *masclet* as a metamorphosis of humans and fireworks, to characterise Faller and Valencian identity. Fireworks also generate deep emotions, as a participant said: “When you hear a *mascletera* [noon fireworks] all your hair stands on end”

Fireworks go with fire; and Fallers agree about the meaning of fire. It means renewal, and criticism is connected with it. As I showed earlier in relationship with the renewal of the Falla's organisation, the participants link the burning of the monument with renewal. As I shall clarify further in Chapter 8, criticism is connected with cleansing by fire as a condition of renewal. When asked about the monument's caricatures and critical satire, a Faller said: "They are implicit in fire/.../ Even when the Festival started, it was like that; the figures were near the houses to be criticised and later on burnt". Fire and fireworks stand for a substantial questioning and penetrating power that leads to renewal.

Fallers also associate fire and fireworks, as an artistic activity, with two other areas which may be mixed up in their narratives: music and sexuality¹⁶. I explained Bakhtin's understanding of the erotic rhythm of some Carnival rituals in Chapter 3. The complexity of the Falla's fireworks makes these relationships more sophisticated. But still, as in the parody rituals analysed by Bakhtin (1987), progress in this erotic rhythm, this time created by means of fireworks, leads towards the destruction of the satirised caricatures by fire at the same time as the community unites around them.¹⁷

Drawing an analogy between music and fireworks one of my informants admitted that just as there are good and bad musicians, so there are good and bad fireworks handlers. Indicating that there had been a bad one the previous year, he insisted: "He had much material and much noise, but no! /.../ A professional musician in an orchestra is not the same as a beginner". He also talked about the 'seeds' of that creation: "[they are] in the fireworks workshops of gunpowder/.../ You've got to know that fireworks handlers have to study a lot to mix things, to make a composition with noise". The first three warning explosions at the beginning of a display are the

progress of the birth of a child: “They advise you of something, as if it would be a being, a baby; it is the same with a pregnant woman. They warn you that it is going to start and they let off the first fireworks; the woman’s waters are breaking”. The new being grows slowly, develops into something, reaches an ‘apotheosis’ and finishes: “It is born; later there is not much noise; life is passing; things are being done; and then the culmination of his task comes as an apotheosis, and finishes; it is all over. Fuck it!, it looks like something ... but it is the truth!”

This story finishes by disclosing the identity of the fireworks handler’s partner/s in the conception, and the role of an adult male in relationship to it. He has a threefold identity: as amateur fireworks handler, adult male and member of the Falla. The climax of the display is the accomplished main task of an adult male. When I directly asked if there was an orgasm he said: “They [fireworks handlers] make one and we want it. Both of us are in agreement, and everybody is happy. The family, which is all of us, is happy/.../ When a man becomes an adult and achieves his objective and he has done a great task, this is the final apotheosis and the final explosion in the air”

Fireworks are finally displayed over the flaming monument, ending the year’s work and pushing the community towards renewal, re-birthing. Fireworks displays, particularly when they are performed during the night, are also frequently compared to growing trees, such as palm trees. Then, the colourful explosions in the air resemble flowers which open their shining petals and quickly perish in the night. They show their ephemeral beauty while people watch them in shared ecstasy.

(ii) Flowers

Flowers are central to Valencian symbolism. For example, they are mentioned in the main verse of the most popular *pasadoble*: “Valencia is the land of flowers, of light and love”. This is possibly due to the traditional concern with the earth and agriculture in the region, but the fact is that the Fallers always mention many festivities in which flowers appear. Some of them are central festivities such as the ‘July Fair’ where a parade called ‘The Battle of Flowers’ takes place in which participants and spectators throw flowers at each other. They also mention other religious festivities which have offerings of flowers to the Virgin, particularly in rural areas. Again, as in the case of fireworks, the *paella* and the *bunyol*, Fallas make such intensive use of flowers (particularly after the Offering to the Virgin) that they are now firmly associated with the Festival.¹⁸ Expenditure on flowers reflects this importance, for they rank fourth or fifth in scale. They account for 7% of expenditure in Ecuador and amount to just slightly more or less than the musical expenses in some Fallas.

Flowers inundate the Festivity. They are present as a motif for its vivid, colourful decorations and as a symbol in the majority of the celebrations and activities. When they are not actually present they are pictured in photographs and posters of the Fallas. Their centrality is also attested by their presence in the costumes of the Falleras in the form of the ‘shadow of roses’ recreated from olden times.

When Fallers are asked about the essence of Fallas, flowers are always mentioned as a substantial part of the Festival. They are said to be as ephemeral as many other symbols and activities of the Festival - indeed, as the Fallas themselves: “They are inseparable from the Festival. There are three or four things without which it is not possible to understand the Festival: fireworks, music, flowers.... If you add to

this that flowers are ephemeral, their time is short and they may be easily broken, like the other elements of the Festival, then you've got it, you understand why they are basic to it". This is the prime characteristic of flowers and it also defines the Festival: their perishable beauty.

Giving flowers is more complicated, and more generous, than giving other things which you know that a person may like or need. It is an act associated with sublime feelings which transcend present likes and dislikes in the material world. Flowers correspond to a special, perhaps sublime relationship. Flowers enable people to make an abstraction from their surroundings.¹⁹ A Faller said: "In this sort of communication, which is what giving something means, you can give something that you or the other person like. Flowers are about this; they are suitable then for generous giving". Giving flowers is meaningful in relationship with the relationship itself: "In the flowers the message is implicit; words are not necessary. If I have to add words with the flowers, that means that we [the giving person and the person receiving them] do not know each other well". Flowers are, then, a symbol of the pure gift in sociability. A propositional content would only spoil it.

There are traditional associations between flowers and women, Spring and fertility. They persist in the culture of the Fallas. The main reason to link flowers with women is beauty. According to a Faller: "I don't think it is more related to reproduction than to beauty; flowers are beautiful, and women too". A Fallera in the group discussion confirmed that this beauty is ephemeral, delicate, sensual, like the beauty of women. She then added that "women are feminine, and flowers are too". The previous Faller confirmed these qualities which connect women and flowers: freshness, light and colour, tenderness, delicacy.

The influence of the Fallas' poetry, that emphasises all these topics, is clear in the discourse of the Falleras. They say it explicitly: "In the poetry that is written for the Falleras the process of development of a flower is compared with the age of women. The young flower is the young woman. Also some flowers are said to go better with women of a particular age". The relationship between flowers and Spring is also found in the poetry. For example, a Fallera said: "Of all the seasons of the year you associate Spring with flowers". He continued by contrasting Spring, as something fresh and young, to Autumn, as death: "Death seems to me Autumn, while Spring is birth, freshness, liveliness. These are the things of women: freshness, liveliness". Then a Fallera confirmed this view and added "light and colour". The qualities that connect flowers, women and Spring seem to be youth, birth, freshness and liveliness, accompanied by light and colours.

As a result of this ephemeral quality and their beauty, flowers are special objects for giving in the Festival celebrations. They are given to the FMs and to the Virgin, but they may also be kept by the participants themselves, as is the case in the Presentation. They are also given in memory of members (and their close relatives) who die. Flowers are particularly important in the Offering and the Presentation, where they are used most widely.

The giving of flowers has a different meaning for the participants in the Presentation and Offering. They are given by the community to the FM and to the other Falleras in the Presentation. Their flowers are used as a decorative element when the whole group in gala costumes is gathered together. This final floral composition is called *cuadro*, picture. The Falleras personally keep their bouquets when the celebration is over. It is important not to forget that the act is as much a presentation

of the totality of the Falla and the FM as an individual one. In the Presentation the group offers flowers to itself, to its members and particularly to the FM.

However, the role of flowers is very different in the Offering. They are personally given by women. The men who accompany them help to transport the flowered basket to the Virgin. The basket is placed after the FM has arrived, as if she offers it on behalf of the Falla. Each bunch of flowers contributes to the floral composition of the Virgin's mantle and robe. The participants do not take part in the composition itself, however, but immediately leave the centre of the ritual scene. This means that the flowers are entirely for the Virgin. The Offering is also an act of giving by all the Fallas of the City, as was intended by the first organisers in 1945. The flowers given by each territorial unit of Valencia are in the colours chosen by the FCC. Therefore the protective mantle and robe of the Virgin are composed of flowers coming from the different colours that are scheduled to arrive in a sequence. Flowers are given personally by women, but a large basket of flowers is also transported by men. The flowers in these baskets do not form part of the composition, for their variable size may be associated with strength of devotion or/and rivalry and public ostentation. Fallers are aware of these details and they talk about the different role of flowers in the structure of the Presentation and the Offering. As an example, the volume of the basket generates debates because it is expensive. The participants explained their valuation of this basket of flowers in economic terms. This debate highlights the priority of sociability over giving flowers, even if the receiver is the Virgin. Some of the participants insisted that the giving of the large floral basket in the Offering is a 'sacrifice' due to its high cost. The majority insisted, however, on the need to put that money into the Casal:

“We are pragmatists/.../ We say that this should be more moderate and put in a context. This year, for example, there was a moment in the polemics, in this battle, when we did not have enough chairs, but some people wanted to make a floral basket costing more than 60,000 pesetas. Well, I said, ‘I am sorry folks, but we cannot make it if we don’t have chairs. First chairs, and later on, if there is something left. Also, we may see other important things”

In sum, flowers are associated with sublime and transcendent feelings in relationship to a meaningful person or sacred entity. They are opposed to the material realm of utility, and so they are markers of such things as generosity and sensitive giving. All the beauty and ephemeral nature of a natural flower, its colour, shape and odour, represent something that cannot be subject to the usual instrumental and depersonalised transactions of the market. Instead, they are associated with the mysteries of love and death. This transient beauty, symbol of pure giving, is what puts flowers in the centre of a Festival of the ephemeral arts: fire, fireworks, music, wooden monuments and satire as the art of criticism. Beauty creates the necessity to play with the ephemeral in the Festivity: it makes the transitory eternal in its constant return. Deviating from the evolutionist, straight line of narration, flowers are a tribute to memory and hope. They are a symbol of the desire to communicate with, and touch, any dimension of transcendence, perhaps through its mediating artistic or festive compositions or just through kissing them, before giving them to the Virgin. The display of flowers in the Fallas is therefore a clear expression of what the Festival is in itself, as a satirical irony inherited from tragedy. It is a sought after but transitory union that takes place and flourishes during the few days of beauty and joy at the start of Spring.

6. CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Civic symbols and official religious figures are secondary to festive sociability in the Fallas. I have already explained the place of the Virgin and Saint Joseph in the context of the Falla's symbols, but I shall complete that account here. The Valencian flag and hymn are the two civic symbols which appear in the Fallas. As I showed in the Introduction, the Fallas are not exactly 'religious' for the Fallers, or at least they are not as religious as other local traditional festivities of saints and virgins. They say that Fallas "have some religion" in them.

Fallers always mention the same figures and celebrations to refer to that part of religion. They identify religion with the Catholic Church, its formal beliefs and sacred figures. The first thing they usually say is that the Festival celebrates Saint Joseph's Day and has his name. However, just as his images are missing from the Casal, the Church celebration of Saint Joseph's Day is not particularly impressive or successful. The celebration normally takes place in the neighbourhood's Catholic Church. Fallas negotiate the time-table with the priest because several Fallas compete for the most convenient time. The participants are exhausted because it is the last day of the Festivity and they probably went to bed very late the night before. On the other hand, Fallas have fireworks at noon, just before the *paella*. This means that Fallas still have a lot to do during the day on which the monuments will be burned. Rivalries between Fallas are an additional factor that shows the unimportance of the Saint in the festive context.

The example of the Falla Ecuador is very revealing in these respects. As the Fallers did not get a good time for a Church celebration, they decided to conduct one

themselves in the open air just in front of the Casal. For that occasion they found a young priest with a clear, open minded post-Vatican II outlook. The Committee members responsible for 'celebrations' advised him "to make the speeches very short because people are tired and we have to organise the fireworks". This year the altar was situated near the Casal's door, right in front of the monument, which had particularly crude scenes of an erotic kind just in front of the improvised religious altar. At a point when the priest was being a bit boring, the Committee member signalled to him to finish quickly. This says a lot about the weak influence that the Catholic Church has in the Festivity. Fallas have enough 'bargaining power', however, to make a priest come to celebrate in their own Casal. Members acknowledge that Saint Joseph attracts little devotion in comparison with the Virgin. And although Saint Joseph also receives an Offering of flowers, which was created by the Council after the success of the Offering to the Virgin, it does not arouse much enthusiasm. As a Fallera said: "It is not an act shared by all the commissions. When I used to go, there were never more than ten commissions there."²⁰

Though intense, the devotion towards the Virgin is not universal in the Festivity. There are non-devotees, or 'non-religious people', who just 'respect' the custom of the other members but give a higher priority to other festive matters. One of them said, indicating the predominance of festive sociability: "I do not believe in these things, but I go to the Offering because I respect other people here. To me, much more important than this is the atmosphere, the group of friends, the meeting, than a symbol which perhaps is important to other people". In fact the Offering is not as "officially religious" as it would appear to an outside observer. The event takes place in the context of a festive parade, the first part of which has a happy relaxed

atmosphere, including singing and dancing. In Godella, as I said before, the return to the Casal takes the form of the Carnival fancy dress parade, which I shall analyse in the next Chapter. Two band directors of Godella explained that the music, songs and dances of the return were the same as in that comical parade. One of them concluded: “On the way back we make a big *Fiesta*”. The Offering, organised by the Council, not the Church, may look to an outsider like a religious or civic ritual. And it can be so for the people who experience the General Festivity organised by the City Council and do not know the internal life of a Falla. However, for the majority of the Fallers and from the perspective of the tradition which is revered in the Commissions, the Offering is the longest and most emotive festive parade. The devotion towards the Virgin is important for many, but what unites them is the enjoyment of parading in the centre of the City. Of course, after the revel the Offering finishes with a dinner in the Casal. The Offering, then, combines a significant figure of the Catholic Church and a civic organisation in the context of a festive understanding rooted in the sociability of the tradition.²¹

The Festivity also has civic symbols. In fact there is an interpretation of the Fallas which puts emphasis on the ‘civic dimension’. I am referring to that offered by Antoni Ariño in *La ciudad ritual, La fiesta de las Fallas* (1992). He interprets the Fallas as a ‘civic religion’, a secular liturgy of modernity, “a civic liturgy of Valencianism”(1992: 333). This civic liturgy has an “imaginary community” and a corresponding identity which is called “temperamental Valencianism”²². Therefore, according to him, “the Fallas are a civic liturgy of temperamental Valencianism” (1992: 338). The central symbols of that imaginary community are the Valencian Flag and Hymn. The main characteristic of that temperamental identity is a “hedonist

materialism” which he associates with what he thinks is the belief of the actors, “a racial symbolism”. In order to demonstrate this he examines the Festival week, emphasising the existence of the new civic rituals such as the Offering (1992: 348). I have shown in previous chapters that the festive tradition has deep roots and a capacity to up-date and integrate new symbols. I have also demonstrated the complexities of the community that the Fallers work to construct, knowing that they are the agents of that construction throughout the whole year. More than a ‘civic’ community it is characterised by its world of sociability, family and friendship, with women and children being of great importance. It is also clear that the Fallas’ identity is not just ‘temperamental’ but also has a peculiar reflexivity. Finally, the Offering of flowers to the Virgin takes place in the context of festive sociability and is not just a civic event.

Ariño’s historical explanation of the inclusion of the Valencian flag and Hymn in the Festivity appears correct to me, although I do not agree with him that they are the highest symbols of the Fallas’ identity (Ariño 1992: 336). By emphasising the ‘civic’ in the Festivity he is obviously exaggerating the importance of these symbols in the context of the entire Festivity. But Fallers rarely mention them as being the main defining symbols of the Fallas’ identity. (Interestingly, the people who are associated with the Co-ordinating agencies did mention them) This does not mean that these symbols are not important in the Fallas, for the Flag functions as a sash on the Falleras’ gala costumes, for example. But they are not at the core of the Fallas’ ‘festive ideal’ and symbolic universe. The main symbols of the Falla are generated by play, humour, comensalism and festive work. They are on display in the Casal and during parades and other celebrations.

On the other hand, civic symbols are more important in Fallas than in local religious festivities. The particularity of the Fallas is not in the use of the Flag and the Hymn to mark the festive territory, as Ariño suggests (1992:336). Both local festivities and the Fallas in the areas researched decorate the streets with little Valencian flags and coloured lights, using a varied repertoire of music to animate the streets. The specificity of the Fallas concerns the role of these civic symbols in the main indoor and outdoor formal celebrations. The Flag is present in the Exaltation and the Presentation, which conclude with the Hymn; and the burning of the monuments concludes with the Valencian Hymn. This gives the Fallas a closer link to the 'civic' than other festivities have, but we should not forget that these events are few in number, and occur in the festive period. The key symbols of these events are others: the FM, the Virgin, fireworks or the monument.

Moreover, during the year and sometimes during the Festival too, one of the most important 'civic' symbols is Valencia F.C, the main soccer team of the City. In Ecuador the Falla regularly meets to watch the matches, sometimes in the open air on a big screen that attracts masses of neighbours. The symbols of Valencia F.C also appear on many of the gifts that Fallers give to each other. They may also appear in the celebrations and even on children's cakes at birthday parties. The emotional attachment of the Fallers to this particular team generates the most regular relationship with a civic symbol in the Fallas that I studied.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have shown that the Fallas' symbolic universe is very rich and is rooted in a long tradition and with the capacity to up date and integrate new symbols.

This symbolic universe constitutes a 'festive ideal' and an identity which is based on and re-created in festive sociability. The Fallas' core symbols show that this festive sociability is fully engaged with the wholeness of life (and death), as was the wider ambit of European popular culture. The central symbols of the festive period are ephemeral and artistic like the Festival itself. The Festival therefore excludes from its ideal some of the 'serious' manifestations of modernity, but includes others which fit into the sociability of the festive tradition. Some civic and official religious symbols are also included, but they depend on festive sociability. In the next Chapter, however, I am going to show that this symbolic universe of the Fallas would be incomplete if it was not complemented by the central symbols of its public sphere: satirical criticism and the artistic monuments.

ENDNOTES

¹ As I said in Chapter 3, festive parading is an expression of the Event's mobilisation of Heidegger's 'Four-fold'. 'Body at a re-move' encapsulates this broad movement in relation to a situated festive *Dasein*, personally or collectively understood.

² Many casals, as in the case of Godella and Ecuador, take the inspiration for their exterior decoration from the traditional Valencian peasants' house, called a *barraca*.

³ In the open air celebrations dedicated to Saint Joseph, Ecuador uses the image of the Virgin as well. They do not have an image of the Saint, but the Virgin presides over a celebration which is paradoxically dedicated to Saint Joseph.

⁴ As is the case with the vegetables of the *paella* and other ingredients (rabbit, and so on), the bunyol also has sexual connotations in the Falla's satirical poetry and in the monuments. In these cases it is usually accompanied by peanuts.

⁵ In the 'high class fallas' there are even symphonic groups alongside the broader musical activity of brass bands and folk groups. A modest Falla may have a small brass band or may have to hire one. On the other hand, singing and dancing activities are frequent throughout the year.

⁶ This circumstance was exploited during the conflicts of the Democratic Transition. Some parties, particularly on the right, were 'populistic' and defended jargon, popular expressions and even a specific language regulation for Valencian, independent of Catalan. Other parties, particularly on the left, defended the unity of Valencian and Catalan, but were caught out as a consequence of trying to use it in a formal or high register without paying much attention to the effective use of language. The inability of this second group of parties to understand the specific need of the Fallas to use a 'humour register' for the satire of the monument and sociability certainly benefited the right wing group of parties. The right discredited the left by charging that its formal use of language was not proper or authentic Valencian but a direct imposition which was excessively 'Catalanist', a manifestation of 'Barcelona's imperialism' over Valencia. This was paradoxical because the Fallas had previously been the main centre for the defence of the language.

⁷ Sociologists are gaining an increasing awareness of the social significance of the human body. Several authors have incorporated it into their sociological perspectives (Foucault, 1975; Habermas, 1987 [1981]; Giddens, 1984; Turner 1984; Mellor and Shilling 1997). However, they do not give enough attention to the implications of the

mobilization of the 'body in festivity'. Giddens and Habermas, as I have shown, cannot explain festive and artistic reflexivity. Foucault, like Turner, is mainly concerned with the 'disciplined body' (Foucault 1978; Habermas 1987a; Giddens 1984). Only Mellor and Shilling pay attention to bodies in collective effervescence, but their emphasis is on the Catholic Church's control of carnivals (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 64-5).

⁸ In phenomenological hermeneutics the existential moods of the *Dasein* precede the differentiation between 'mind' and 'body' or between 'reason' and 'emotions'. The 're-moval' of the parade is a part of the festive and artistic movement, *Ereignis*, which cyclically urges the community to re-present itself and its symbols in relationship with the World. Body at a re-move has two inter-related meanings. On the one hand, it is the animation and display of the emotional festive mood of the community. On the other hand, it is a symbolic representation of the community. The community therefore re-cognises itself. The basis for this re-presentation, which is a public display, is the body in joyful parading.

⁹ M. Halbwachs (1939) reduced the potential of the Durkheimian school to make sense of musicians' memory by insisting that music was basically a matter of written scores, but he confused the far reaching memory of music with the education of a modern professional. Nobody can read music in the Falla Dr. Valls's two bands; they play by heart as does Luciano Pavaroti. Hermeneutics has a theory of memory in relation to 'playing by heart' which I have used in previous chapters.

¹⁰ John Lofland has conceptualized crowd joys and he also has convincingly argued that 'although crowd joys are extremely important, they have been almost totally

neglected by scholars in recent decades' (Lofland 1985: 63), while fear and hostility dominate recent research into collective behaviour.

¹¹ Heidegger (1982: 83) sees the time of March as the most appropriate (and 'appropriating') because it is the time of the perishable and the ephemeral.

¹² Fireworks are fundamental for 'atmosphere'. The smoke and sulphurous odour is everywhere in the Falla's territory and neighbourhood. It sticks to the body and clothes. Fireworks are an essential part of this contemporary setting for the festive 'popular inferno' of carnival.

¹³ The general characteristics of Valencian fireworks are more accentuated in the Fallas researched. One of the reasons is that the main Valencian fireworks handlers come exactly from these festive areas.

¹⁴ Dylan Thomas, in 'Do not go gentle into that dark night'

¹⁵ Beck's (1992) and Giddens's (1991) concerns about risk are culturally one-sided

¹⁶ Fallas have day and night fireworks. Music is a common denominator in the participants' accounts in both cases. Night fireworks also include colours, and people frequently include comparisons with trees and flowers in this particular case.

¹⁷ Psychoanalysis can also be applied to this line of interpretation in so far as fire represents the phallus.

¹⁸ Fallas are therefore redefining wide areas of Valencian symbolism and providing a new combination of them to construct festive identity. This re-definition may have repercussions for the understanding of Valencian identity as a totality due to the increasing social relevance of the Fallas. This may help to explain why newcomers find it easy to feel they are Valencians as a result of being Fallers

¹⁹ On the connection between the abstract quality of flowers and transcendence, see Beckford (1995). See also Goody 1993.

²⁰ The creation of these two Offerings of flowers by the same authorities, one with success (Virgin) and the other with failure (Saint Joseph), proves that the power of people to 'invent' a ritual or tradition does not guarantee its success. This is more evident in the case of the Fallas because they officially commemorate Saint Joseph.

²¹ The Offering thereby re-positions the Virgin as the main official sacred entity, displacing Saint Joseph to a secondary place. Her characteristics, and high devotion, have therefore helped to establish a 'balance' among the many ingredients of a Festivity which has always been seen by the 'official religious authorities' as 'dangerously' situated in the middle of Lent.

²² 'Temperamental' in Spanish refers to emotions in general, and therefore has a wider meaning than in English.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In this Chapter I characterise the features of the Fallas' public sphere. The two first sections deal with daily sociable conversation and meetings, which is the basis of the Fallas's sense of the public sphere, the 'public thing', and with the Fallas ambiguous, reflexive relationship with the mass media and communications. The second part of the Chapter focuses on the aspects of the public sphere which are more relevant during the Festival. They are the critical but comic fancy dress parade and the artistic monuments. All the characteristics of the Fallas' public sphere are grounded in the features of festive sociability outlined in the previous chapters. They show that there is a distinctive popular public sphere which retains the sense of the 'public thing' that used to characterise European popular culture, mainly in the culture of Carnival. This public sphere is able to make a bridge between tradition and modern life.

1. DAILY SOCIABLE CONVERSATION AND MEETINGS

The Fallas' public sphere is grounded in regular sociable encounters and meetings. In the previous chapters I have described many situations when actors meet, talk and put festive sociability into practice. For example, the daily conversation of women about children, their schools and health, involve constant references to the quality of local organisations. The regular joking while playing cards or dominoes equally involves a sociable mixture of topics which bring ironic and satirical remarks to references to bear on local and general events.

For example, when I was interviewing two adult newcomers, an older Valencian came in and started to talk to them. He immediately got into a joke competition with Paco, a Andalusian newcomer, by playing with the diminutive of his name in a funny voice: "Paquito, Paquito!". Paco answered by asking how things were; the other replied that he had got to go to the doctor. In the middle of his reply he spontaneously changed from Spanish to Valencian when he referred to the doctor. The italicised words were spoken in the Valencian language: "I have to come back Tuesday *because I have to go to the doctor and have my blood pressure checked. Anyway, if he tells me not to do something I won't take any notice*". Paco laughed and asked why he was going then? The older man answered: "I don't know because the doctors don't take much care of me. However, I am a good boy: I don't drink, smoke or fuck. So, he cannot prohibit me to do anything really". Knowing that the other was a bit mean Paco answered: "They will steal from you everything except money". After this the conversation turned into a long joking comparison between the decline of male sexual power, the brevity of aperitifs and cooking and eating snails. The old man shifted spontaneously to Valencian, while Paco used Spanish in the context of this almost surreal joking conversation. The conversation ended with questions about the best place to collect snails in Godella. Both men were aware that the forest where there used to be 'millions of snails' had been destroyed by recent urbanisation, which had provided luxury housing for newly arrived rich people. This had created a series of changes, including the relocation of the local National Health Centre. The old man said that his doctor was too far away from his house. The conversation included criticism of the local representatives of the leading political party which had framed its electoral promises with a view to obtaining the votes of the newly arrived people.

The old man claimed that everything was being taken and put closer to where the rich people lived: "*The whole Town is going to be taken there*. Then they will put on free buses. Well, the buses don't matter; but if they put buses on they will do so because *they have taken away everything that used to exist in the Town there*". The encounter ended as it began, but this time Paco used the same tone as the other did at the beginning: "Ay, Ay, you are always complaiiiiiining, complaiiiiiining". The conversation included joking, teasing, bragging and subtle shifts of language to make points about politics, modernity and the state of health services. This mixture represents the popular public sphere in action.

2. MASS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

New media of communication have been making their presence felt in the Festivity. They are replacing the traditional forms of communication that the Fallas had in previous times: the *llibret* and the specialised press. The first medium of written expression and communication for each Falla was the '*llibret de la Falla*', which became ubiquitous in the second half of the 19th century. It was a small booklet centred on a piece of literary satire and comic poetry. It related the scenes and particular features of the monument to the common theme which represented an expressive maxim often taken from popular wisdom or morals. Sometimes the maxim took the form of a hieroglyph, which the monument was intended to explain. People could make a guess about its meaning. The *llibret* still constitutes the basis of the Fallas' literature, and there are poets who are skilled in writing them. Other publications include the festive programme, poetry for the FMs and other additions, such as pictures of the Falla and local advertising. The traditional literature of the

Fallas also includes specialised magazines for the Festivity and other associated satirical and humorous reviews and publications, typical of the Valencian sense of humour. They are in the background of the Festivity, helping people to interpret the Festivity for themselves.

The new media are significant in the home. They are at the centre of family life, particularly the television, but also radio, press, video and computers. This extraordinary development of the new media has accompanied changes in social structure and helped to shaped social relations in the neighbourhood. This process has been very intense from the sixties onwards as the Festivity has expanded through the newly urbanised metropolitan areas and the outskirts of medium- size cities in the Valencian Region. Some sensitive Fallers are aware of this connection between urban transformation and the new place of the media at the centre of family life. They, and the artists, say that the new media, particularly television, are a main reason behind the choice of new targets of the Fallas' satire which are not so much local, as very general these days.

Fallas vary in their attitudes towards television and new media, but two attitudes seem to be predominant. One is of confrontation, the other is of negotiation. The second one is more reflexive and critical of television than the first. It may even include deriving 'new options' for festive sensibility from the relationship.

The confrontational attitude is clearly visible in the case of the Falla Dr. Valls which is constantly at war with television, particularly on two issues. One is the popular magazine programmes on Friday night which may divert some Fallers away from the 'sacred dinner' of Friday night. The second enemy is televised football during the Festival period. It may also distract many Fallers or even spoil a dinner, as

was the case in 1997 on the occasion of the match between Valencia and Schalke 04 in a European cup competition. The match coincided with a dinner organised and paid for by the President (who did not like football too much). The Falla was totally divided: some tried to eat and talk while ignoring the match, and others were eating and watching (and criticising the President). There had previously been a big debate about the convenience of taking the television set out of the Casal for everybody to watch while eating. As one of the women Fallers said, “the only god that can kill the Fallas is television football.” The adults in this Falla were opposed to the young people’s request for a big screen television. Moreover, the ability to deal with new media technology is low, and this is why photographic and video dossiers on the Festival period are made by professional outsiders who are paid for their services.

The Ecuador Falla is an example of the model of negotiation. Members there take advantage of the new media to create reflexive innovations for sociability. First, televised events are used to draw people to the Casal or the square. The Falla has a big screen, and football matches may be watched by members, friends and neighbours. Such was the case for the final of the Spanish Royal Cup between Valencia F.C. and Deportivo which, according to a member, helped to create a mixture of hooliganism and ‘fallerism’. Second, television has a place in the context of daily sociability, as an ingredient in association. For example, young people may meet to watch television in the Casal in small groups. Third, many members are able to use video cameras and recorders to film events in the Falla. This has another effect: it attracts a lot of people to watch themselves on the big screen, with all the associated humorous comments and good atmosphere.

Fourth, this collective watching of television may include ‘rival’ popular

magazine programmes, which are then taken as objects of all sorts of jokey commentaries and interpretations in the festive context. For example the Ecuador Falla made a parody of a well known Spanish programme about parodies, 'The National Parody'. They invented a television programme (and a fictitious television channel) for the neighbourhood, with a silly name that represented its streets. All members of the association created the roles. Some acted as presenters, being carefully dressed to caricature real television presenters. Other groups did karaoke parodies of songs, inventing new words to do with the Falla. Finally, and most imaginatively, others videoed comical sketches to make adverts including spoof chats with the people in neighbourhood shops and other satirical caricatures of television advertising. Finally, this parody was used to liven up the Election of the FM one night, but this event was itself filmed, thereby providing a new reason to meet and watch it again.

The main events of the general festive program are fully covered in Valencian television, radio and press in great detail. Spanish television normally provides a brief and basic coverage of the events, except for the final night of the *cremà*, which is almost fully covered. This coverage normally deals with what I have called the 'other festivity', the one intended for the general public who do not live the internal sociability of the Casal. This coverage is of the events organised by the City's FCC. It focuses on the more spectacular aspects of the Festivity: *Ofrena*, day and night fireworks and the burning of the monuments. The internal sociability of the associations is neglected so that the audience learns nothing about the people who really work for the Festivity.

However, a different initiative was undertaken by a new private Valencian

television channel, called 'Valencia Te Ve', which has a very small audience. They went to the Casals during the year and made a programme to highlight aspects of the social life of the Festivity. When they came to one of the Fallas I had studied, the 'Falla El Vetero', I had the opportunity to witness the production of their programme. The result turned out to be an artificial caricature of life in the Falla, but members enjoyed watching themselves appearing to have a good time.

In general the Fallas' attitude towards television could be qualified as ambiguous. On the one hand, members have a certain respect for the new media because of their authority and their 'aura'. On the other hand, they make television the main object of their satire, thereby raising the 'power' of television only to bring it down to earth later on.

3. FANCY DRESS AND SATIRICAL PARADES

Fancy dress is important in the Festival, particularly in the comical, critical and satirical parade called the Cavalcade of the Puppets (*Ninots*). Fallas compete to organise the best, walking, funny shows through the streets. Districts and localities put on slightly different types of cavalcades, so that it is difficult to describe a common model. However, one cavalcade really gives you the feeling of the whole range.

The cavalcade in Godella, in the metropolitan area of the City in which I did part of my participant research, may be briefly summarised as follows: Fallers wear fancy dress, normally carefully designed during the previous month to fit in with the organised shows which each group of friends enjoys preparing in advance (but sometimes they are rented too). The several little groups put on a show that sometimes resembles street theatre and incorporates prepared and improvised dialogues. Dancing

and singing occur where the several groups meet up, describing patterns in movement, sometimes with the participation of spectators. On these occasions they may combine the prepared sketches with an improvisation specific to a particular section of spectators. This can take the form of teasing, slapstick or some other type of playful interaction. The shows are comical, ironic and critical at the same time.

The parade is very long, and may take more than four hours during the afternoon or evening. Participants finish exhausted, particularly those who dance. Each Falla parades independently from its own Casal to the main street and back. They meet other Fallas in the main street and will co-operate to form a massed parade. The interaction between them often involves cracking jokes and ad libbing.

This cavalcade belongs to the genre of Carnival but never loses its focus on comic, satirical, popular criticism¹. It has a similar structure to the original Carnival parade of ancient Feasts. However, there are different forms of carnival parade, and the Cavalcade does not follow the more common versions. A distinctive feature of the Cavalcade are the critical sketches in which the players are not generally masked, and impersonality and anonymity are not emphasised. The Carnival of the Salon's rule about wearing masks does not apply. The players seek personal recognition from the crowd for their popular humour and satirical criticism, for this establishes an open interaction with the public. A Fallera of Catalan origin denied that there was any connection between the Carnival of the Salon and the Cavalcade:

'Absolutely not. Here it is a joke, laughing at everything. I laugh at everything that happens; I laugh at the lack of money; and I laugh at the ONCE lottery. By the way, one year we dressed up as lottery cards for the blind, of ONCE, we made the fancy dress. It was a little tease; I laugh and

will laugh again.'

She also considered Catalan carnivals to be much more serious and claimed that the street setting was crucial because it permitted greater liveliness and a sense of participation among onlookers who could comment on, and laugh at, the parade figures.

Fancy dress is liberating because it brings what is hidden to the surface, and then "allows you to do things you don't normally do, such as being a woman, a monster and things like that". It is therapeutic because it enables people to laugh at themselves and throw off their inhibitions, but actors also see a potential for criticism in this joyful liberation. For example, a Fallera relates her personal feeling of liberation to a group composition that criticised racism:

'I consider that fancy dress is a very deep part of the Falla. I mean to say, I cannot laugh at the others, but I can laugh at myself. Then you get rid of things that are inside you and cause you worries and problems. There was one year when we each had two hands, one black and the other white, shaking against racism.'

The joyful display of these collectively made disguises and compositions is the basic element of this critical and satirical Cavalcade. It is not a movement of protest, but its basic purpose is one of common enjoyment, 'total fun' (*'una juerga total'*); and it generates laughter among the spectators with the help of a colorful way to present a topic for criticism: "The truth always emerges from the criticism of something. We criticise something particular. This year there were several men who disguised themselves as Roldan, Felipe and Guerra [contemporary Spanish politicians], and they were hitting each other in the middle of the road. It is always a satire of the present."

These topics for popular criticism and enjoyment include: general politics; abstract ethics; general social criticism, like the obsession with technology as a fashion (using fax and mobile telephone disguises); self-criticism; arts with no direct critical purpose, such as being disguised as 'zingaras' who tease or hit the spectators with a stick and ask for money in exchange for dancing; or caricatures of fashionable films or television programmes and adverts.

The Cavalcade may also choose topics taken from the monument itself that are displayed with the help of some of the *ninots* in its more representative scenes. This was the original sense of the Cavalcade and the reason why it is also called 'Cavalcade of the *Ninot*'. The Cavalcade, like the monument, is people's spontaneous satirical criticism, difficult to control by power.

4. THE EPHEMERAL ART OF THE MONUMENTS

The complex historical transformation of the old figures of straw, cardboard and wood, the *parot*, into the present monuments cannot be dealt with here. Nor it is possible to account for the diverse character of the monuments and their forms². I shall be concerned here with two issues. First, the people who build the constructions and their relationship with the Commissions. Second, the main features of the monuments' meaning, content and composition. I shall emphasise their focus on satirical criticism and on a grotesque representation of the body, in association with myths. The monument represents the Festival and it is a model of its public sphere. It is a contemporary re-elaboration of the peculiar characteristics and motives of the European popular culture which has retained its satirical 'public square' in Valencia.

(i) The changing role of artists and Commissions as constructors of the satirical monuments

Satirical criticism plays an important role in Valencian humour, and it is an essential feature of both the sociability of the Festivity and the monument. Members of Fallas and artists identify the deep meaning of the Festival of the Fallas in its popular criticism that is humorous and satirical about current events. Therefore Fallas are a way of understanding the Public Sphere. Historically, they were spontaneous criticisms of events and persons in a neighbourhood or locality, but they have evolved towards other more general levels of debate; and the monument has become a skilful construction by a professional artist. In fact, the making of the monument shares some features derived from the contemporary division of labour, communications and technology. Traditional crafts increasingly interact with industrial processes. As an artist said:

‘Fallas are not exactly what they were before. Now the design is done by the artists, and communication is so quick that I can go to Barcelona today and later on we may go to the cinema in Valencia. Fallas were isolated before; they were local and more something of the neighbourhood. They were born like that. Today the Falla has been industrialised at the level of their construction. There are many Fallas now, everywhere, even in the little villages. Thus critique is not local at all.’

Other corresponding changes have taken place at the level of relationships between the associations and the artists. This relationship was a closer and more inclusive one in previous times. It was difficult to separate the interventions of the local artisans from the collection of old furniture and useless materials by the

neighbourhood. In this context, the participation of the Guilds and the sociable network of the neighbourhood seems to be relevant. However, there are no detailed historical studies which analyse this initial connection between artisans and festive sociability. It is a general view of ordinary people that it began with the Guild of carpenters, whose patron saint is St. Joseph. This widespread opinion is contestable from a historical point of view³.

The fact is that the associations are prepared to make a monument themselves if they are too short of money to buy the services of an artist or if they simply want to keep their expertise⁴. On the other hand, the capacities needed to make a contemporary Falla exceed the abilities of a carpenter alone. In fact, if we look at the present relationships between the artists and the Guilds, we find that several professions co-exist because a variety of capacities are needed. The present Guild of Artists, *Gremi d'Artistes Fallers*, is actually a contemporary formation from the best surviving craftsmen and women from the traditional guilds.

Artists are aware of the changes in society and in the type of pressures of modern life that have sent them to the 'refuge' of the Fallas. They recognise themselves as the inheritors of the craft tradition of making the altars or the wooden carriages of the partially carnivalesque processions of Corpus Christi. These carriages, called *roques*, carried people in disguise who represented the popular dances, the drama mysteries and brief satirical representations which took place in the streets. Fallas, like the *roques*, are monuments that demand various skills. Artists associate the present existence of these capacities with a solidly rooted artistic Valencian culture that has its precedents in the old *oficios*, the Guilds' craftsmanships. When artists and Fallers want to stress the peculiarity of the Fallas in comparison with

other Fire Festivals they always indicate first of all the high artistic value of the monuments.

The social life of the artists' workshops is much richer and friendlier than in other workplaces characterised by a complex division of labour. Workers are very few, sometimes four or five, and they normally enjoy a personal relationship with the artists. The nature of this link fundamentally determines the patterns of social life and labour relations that predominate in each workshop. There is a difference between the workshops directed by an artist who has very few workers, who are often friends or members of the family, and those run on a strictly contractual basis⁵. During my fieldwork I was working in the workshop which constructed the Falla of 'Plaza. Dr. Valls de Godella'. It was managed by an artist who had several members of his family and several friends working with him. I can only mention one of the more relevant features of my stay there, namely the fact that labour relations were characterised by playful banter and also by the other characteristics of festive sociability which are common in the Commissions.

This close relationship between being a Faller and an artist, which occurs in the sociability of the workshop and of the Casal, stems from two facts. First, artists and workers are also, or have been, Fallers although they may not be members of the same Falla for which they are constructing a particular monument. But, as we know, the 'Fallera family' is very big, and there are common patterns in its sociability. An artist said: "Yes, yes, of course, these people have been living in this world of Fallas all their lives. They have been used to it from childhood/.../ Of course, if you weren't there you wouldn't be dedicated to this job. If you sell peanuts you don't sell furniture. The reason is that if you have been doing something since you are a child,

and you are living in this world, then you continue with it.”. Second, members and artists are involved with the figures in the monument. For example, the static monument may be similar in its satirical meaning to the moving satirical figures and group compositions portrayed by members during the parade of the *ninot*.

(ii) Meaning, content and composition of the monuments

The monument’s popular criticism, according to participants and artists, satisfies a felt need for a real, effective catharsis, a cleansing and renewal by fire. The instrument of criticism is humour, laughter and the cracking of jokes. The symbol of the Phoenix is frequent in these accounts. An artist explained his understanding of the connection between humour, criticism and effective change as follows:

‘The Falla begins with a critical sense of humour. The content of this critique is social, economic and political. The meaning of it is that the Falla is erected, exposed to the public and burnt, to be immediately born again. There is something fantastic here, and some people don’t understand why it has to be burnt... Well, there is a market economy with wrong effects. The logical thing is to criticise it, and next year go to something else. It is necessary to burn things. This is not like the activity of the banks that keep things. No! No! We set things on fire so that other things can grow again from the ashes. This is the meaning of the Fallas, and I find it beautiful.’

A monument is a sculptural composition and as such a representation. A prominent artist went so far as to call it a piece of “static theatre”. Artists also mention a relationship to cartoons and the puppet theatre. This theatre of the monument is not independent of the neighbourhood square in which it is erected. It is

at the centre of a public square which will become the critical square of 'popular judgements'⁶. Experienced artists first go to the square to get ideas before they do the initial drawing of the monuments. The square makes the monument, but the monument remakes it too with its novel presence. The space and visibility are particularly important, because they are the key to a good burning⁷.

The themes and characters of monuments are essentially of two sorts. One type is related to current social and political life. Consequently, politicians are usually the object of strong criticism and satire, so that Fallas produce a critique of power. This consideration of current events is normally contrasted with the past, so that Fallas are also a permanent conversation between the modern and the old .

A second, common theme is Valencian traditions and popular myths. Monuments often represent a variety of them. I am only going to refer to some cases that highlight the uses of the grotesque body in the monument. Figures often display exaggerations, distortions and metamorphoses of every part of the human body that can be transformed into vegetable, animal, mineral and even technological things. Inverse transformations also occur, with anthropomorphised animals, rocks, vegetables, houses or well known landmarks of the City.

But one of the central motifs of European popular culture is sex and reproduction. Fallas are very uninhibited about sex; they use visual similes and metaphors often featuring Valencian agricultural produce. As one would expect, genitalia, their form and efficiency or deficiency of function are a favourite target. For example, a bird or a big carrot can represent a phallus. Artists, when asked about this way of picturing sexuality often say that they are the "narrators of people's lives" and that this is their vocabulary: "People use them. They don't say 'clitoris', they say

'figa'⁸. Last year one of the artists who sculpted a monument that was critical of the commercialisation of sexuality on television, devised a scene about an erotic telephone with which people fell in love; the telephone took on a phallic form.

Mythical figures often appear in association with the presentation of the grotesque body. They are normally in the central part of the monument and help to hold the scenes together. Artists express confidence about the persistence of mythology. The frontiers of purification are not totally clear and demand the ambiguity of myth: "We put in a lot of mythology because the characters who have endured through all the civilisations are mythological: the satyr, the centaur, the siren. They'll never die". But these myths may be associated with other figures, such as a dragon or the devil which are said to be synonymous and "to be everywhere because they symbolise evil". A dragon, like the devil, "is everywhere, it is hell and we put many hells in the Fallas". The Falla as static theatre can also be compared with an altar-like form of representation; but other figures, such as the devil, are said to occupy the place of the Saints⁹.

Monuments are burnt on the 19th of March in an atmosphere of collective melancholia, but once the mythical and grotesque figures are burnt, and the beautiful descendant of the original figure of straw, the *parot*, is destroyed, the President resigns, and everything starts again¹⁰. The moment of the burning is one that really affects the body. The static monuments still have an old power to 'move' people: "you feel an emptiness, and then you understand that the monument was occupying a place", "it is a renewal; this night we also have died."

The body in the Festivity of the Fallas is actively and skilfully put into action, or portrayed, as a joyful medium for constructing identity and establishing an

expressive and emotional collective dialogue of recognition with the public. It is also a site where the memory of festive tradition is lodged in complex articulation with the modern life. The body at a festive remove represents relations of coexistence, overlap and mutual interaction between tradition and modernity. In the Fallas modernity does not obliterate or enslave tradition. On the contrary, there is a dynamic of 'accommodation' between tradition and modernity, and the 'festive' body is at its centre. It is in movement in parades when clothed in gala costumes or fancy dress. It is also portrayed as grotesque in the ephemeral monuments. At the same time, the contemporary body has not lost its association with mythical figures.

In short the body serves as an instrument or vehicle of comical, satirical and popular criticism that starts by questioning itself. But, unlike formal critique, this embodied questioning starts with a joyful, humorous transformation and ends with the burning of the grotesque characters and mythical figures, thereby generating a melancholic tone that resembles tragedy. The body in the Fallas retains its ancient capacity to move or affect the Public. Contrary to Habermas's dismissal of the Plebeian Public Sphere then, the Fallas of Valencia indicate that a Popular Public Sphere is still in operation (at least in Valencia) and that myths, far from having disappeared from modern life, may still be at the centre of popular criticism in modernity.

ENDNOTES

¹ Spontaneous parading in fancy dress also occurs. On one occasion a group of members from Dr. Valls made a contemporary replica of the Carnival burial parades

of big sausages, pigs, etc., that Bakhtin describes (see above, Chapter 3). A man disguised as a widow was accompanied by other people in fancy dress, all crying and carrying a coffin to the Casal. The 'dead body' was an enormous piece of bread (full of sausages) with the roasted head of a pig on top. Of course, the parade finished with a meal.

² The main categories are: (a) adult and children and (b) special and normal monuments. See Ariño (1993)

³ As I said in the Introduction, this emphasis on the role of Saint Joseph and on carpenters, has been influenced by the Catholic re-interpretation of the Festival.

⁴ The number of Fallas which make the monument themselves is difficult to determine today. The monuments which are 'signed' by associations may be about 10 %, but it does not mean that the Commissions really make the monument. Some commissions 'internally' pay an artist who does not personally 'sign'. A more realistic account would situate that number at about 5% of the total.

⁵ The workshops of the 'special Fallas' are considerably less 'sociable' than the workshops which have fewer aspirations to obtain prizes. The innovations of the special Fallas are, however, superior at the level of humour. Sociability, as we know, decreases when it has serious objectives, even when the objective is to create humour.

⁶ The connection between 'judgements', sacrifice, purification and renewal is also characteristic of other religious Festivals. See, for example, Arthur Weiser (1962: 35) on the place of the Psalms in the Covenant Festival.

⁷ The ephemeral monument, as a contemporary 'Counter-panopticon', shows the limitations of Foucault's consideration of the body and the form and transformation of rituals which he proposes in *Surveiller et Punir*. According to him, the rituals which

are developed in the centre of a square and watched by the population transform into a 'central eye' (of which, prison is the model) which is thought to be watching everybody. Fallas, as popular judgements, remain however in the centre of the square. They display a different line of transformation of 'plebeian rituals'. Foucault rightly thinks that the plebs is 'the limit' of the Panopticon (1981: 78), but he does not analyse a wide enough variety of plebeian rituals. Therefore he can only see the body as disciplined.

⁸ Shakespeare also clung to expressive language: "I like long life better than figs" (Anthony and Cleopatra).

⁹ Fallas also have some characteristics of the *roques*, the big mobile altars which displayed scenarios for short religious tableaux in the Corpus Christi procession. One of these mobile altars, the most popular, is still dedicated to the devil: *La Roca Diablera*.

¹⁰ Interestingly for people with a taste for psychoanalysis, the name of the original figure of straw, the *parot*, means 'big father'.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

The main outcomes of this study on the Fallas concern (a) the relation between tradition and modernity in the festive tradition, (b) the festive sociability and reflexivity of the Festivity and (c) the Fallas' distinctive form of public sphere.

This study has shown that traditions are not necessarily opposed to modern and contemporary forms of experience. Tradition and modernity may be interwoven, accommodating to each other in the synthesising activities of the Fallers. Tradition needs to be considered as more malleable than it is often supposed to be. Ancient festive traditions such as the Fallas are able to up-date, enhance themselves and expand by incorporating contemporary experiences into their tradition.

The transmission of festive traditions such as the Fallas occurs through the central activities of festive sociability. These activities are undertaken by the Fallers in their special community. A network of close families and groups of friends is the medium through which the transmission takes place in both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions. Festive sociability can also include experiences coming from modern institutions such as voluntary associations, schools or the City Council. Similarly, Fallas can develop reflexive mechanisms of their own which co-exist with strictly modern forms of reflexivity. These reflexive mechanisms are grounded in festive sociability and selected in accordance with its own criteria.

The reflexivity of festive traditions has a special understanding of the 'public thing'. The public sphere of European, popular festive traditions has not disappeared,

but in the Fallas at least it has grown more elaborate and has expanded into contemporary life. Social theories operating with a narrow view of reflexivity and the public sphere are not capable of fully explaining the Fallas or their mode of transmitting traditions.

In this thesis, however, the concepts of festive sociability and of a festive public sphere have been deployed to account for the transmission of an age-old festive tradition, namely, the Fallas of Valencia. The Fallas are a Festival that can be selectively combined with aspects of the modern world without losing the reflexive power of satire which goes back to ancient tragedy. In so doing, they show that there are other ways of being 'modern' which are different from the standard implications of 'mainstream modernity'. Fallas show that more than one kind of modernity is possible today.

This study has its own limitations, however. Although a narrow and intense focus on the social life of a small number of Commissions was necessary as a first step to discerning the festive sociability of the Fallas, this inevitably meant that other issues were relatively neglected. I can see several aspects which have not been adequately addressed in this study but I shall summarise them here under two main headings.

(a) Other types of Fallas. The study has narrowly focused on new Fallas in the recently created or urbanised neighbourhoods of the City of Valencia and its metropolitan area. These neighbourhoods are mainly occupied by the working class or lower middle class. Other types of Fallas have been visited but not researched in depth. For example, the 'bourgeois, rich Fallas', which are in the centre of the City, have interesting and different elements to analyse. It remains to be seen how a

bourgeoisie (which in other contexts may shun the life of the street) makes bourgeois sociability compatible with the 'popular' features of the festivity. A central question is to what extent festive sociability undergoes changes in the setting of different classes. My provisional hypothesis is that the actors, forms and central activities of festive sociability are the same as in 'working class Fallas' but that they probably manage to amalgamate the long-term institutionalised satirical culture of the Valencian bourgeoisie with popular culture and the present-day particularities of both. If this is so, the 'bourgeois Falla' should be susceptible to explanation in terms of the same theoretical perspective as the one advanced in this thesis.

Another neglected topic is the 'Historical Fallas' in the old centre of the City. Many of them were founded in the 19th century but most of their members live in other neighbourhoods now. They are interesting for many reasons, but I shall comment on only two. The first is that their history contains the key to the ways in which the sociability of the neighbourhood was linked with the artistic expertise necessary to build the festive monuments and therefore how the guilds (which had been represented in the Corpus Christi) became associated with the territorial social solidarity of the neighbourhood which lies behind the Fallas. The second concerns their present-day festive experience but is linked with the territorial character of social solidarity as well: the 'Historical Fallas' are now heading a new process of 'de-territorialisation' of the Festivity. Many members live outside the neighbourhood but they still help to organise and run the Festivity, thereby creating new links between different areas of the City. As rates of geographical mobility tend to increase, the role of dis-embodied mechanisms of interaction (in an idiosyncratic relation with festive sociability) becomes more important for the committed members. As it seems that

many of these Fallas are still active, the question is whether the Festivity has found a new way to expand and 'globalise' in modern conditions.

The 'special category' Fallas, which have been occasionally commented on in this study, are not important in quantitative terms and are not representative of the most widespread type of Falla, but they are definitely worthy of closer examination than has been possible here. For example, they make extensive use of modern economics and administration and are highly inventive in a wide range of things including humour, their monuments and form of organisation. They are the Fallas which 'maximise' the power of tradition to accommodate modernity.

The Fallas which construct the monument themselves, preserving the age-old custom, are also an interesting minority which needs research. And still other types of Fallas should be researched as well: the Fallas which are outside the Metropolitan area of the City; the institutionally promoted 'Experimental Fallas'; and the small bonfires which are spontaneously organised by groups of friends, sometimes in institutional settings such as schools or companies.

(b) Research on institutions and the history of the Fallas. This study has dealt with the connection between Fallas and other social institutions from the perspective of participants in the festive sociability. Although many interviews were conducted with outside officials and authorities, civic and religious representatives, they were not intended to produce an institutional analysis as such. Rather, the interviews helped to place local Fallas in a wider context. But these institutions also have complex links among themselves, so ideally it would be possible to examine the entire nexus between modern institutions and the Festivity.

Institutional analysis has an historical and a comparative vein. It is often conducted, however, without enough sensitivity towards the specific activities of social actors. An institutional analysis which could integrate the agents, activities and contents of festive sociability would throw light on the complex circumstances in which the ancient festive sociability of the tradition and its 'dialogue' with the cultural and institutional dimensions of modernity undergo change. We need to know to what extent festive traditions may also develop a variety of ways of becoming modern. The lack of theoretical insight into this is partially responsible for the current tendency to contrast tradition and modernity, and it does not help us to understand the 'festive way of life'.

PhD theses are constrained by word limits, and my chapters have had to conform with these 'functional' requirements. I do not wish to make excuses for my mistakes or lack of knowledge about particular issues; and I am sure that there will be many arguable things in my text. It is just that things have their own nature, and the Fallas needed more words but they had to be excised from my drafts! I cannot fully explain these multiple 'absences' but I would like to make a few brief comments.

Early drafts contained abundant data, analysis and interpretation of the monuments and the social life of the artists' workshops. This thesis does not do 'justice' to the six months I spent working in a workshop and visiting many others or to the multiple interviews I conducted with artists. The results of my research on The 'Guild of Falla Artists' are crammed into a few pages in Chapter 8. The controversy on identity and nationalism was also treated at length in an earlier version but is now reduced to three paragraphs and an endnote. The Theory Chapter, particularly the part dealing with Habermas, was considerably longer, but a section on the festive rituals

and the festive programme had to disappear. Many paragraphs which connected the issues of the Festivity with sexuality (and violence) have also been erased. A whole section which compared the Fallas with other Fire Festivals around the world found no place in the thesis. Finally, many of the best quotations from the participants had to be left out, especially in Chapters 4 and 8.

After doing all this necessary surgery I mysteriously realised that the thesis had the same 'structure' of basic contents as Schiller's and Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. Even so, however, I must burn it after my viva. I would like to write my study again.

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